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ENCH LITERATURE DURING
E LAST HALF CENTURY

JOHN W. CUNLIFFE

PIERRE DE BACOURT

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FRENCH LITERATURE DURING THE LAST HALF CENTURY

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FRENCH LITERATURE DURING THE LAST HALF-CENTURY

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PREFACE

This is a companion volume to 'English Literature during the Last Half-Century' and follows the same general plan. In the earlier half of the period, only those authors are discussed whose work has been shown by the test of time to be of first-rate importance, either for its artistic value or for its effect on subsequent literary development, in France and elsewhere. In the latter part of the book we have endeavoured to select those authors of the last quarter of a century who represent prevailing currents of literary interest and give promise for the future. The difficulty of judging authors whose literary activity is still proceeding is obvious, and no claim of finality is made for the selections and suggestions here presented. We have tried to be fair as well as frank and to maintain a wide range of sympathy for that variety of opinion which is characteristic of modern France, literary excellence and significance being in all cases held of supreme importance. If the reader has different views from some of those here expressed on literary issues, we ask only for the same privilege of freedom of thought he justly claims for himself.

The bibliographies are intended to be helpful rather than exhaustive; and in the last three chapters limits of space have necessitated a rather rigorous process of selection; within these limits, no pains have been spared to secure accuracy. The study of contemporary literature offers peculiar difficulties in the field of fact as well as in that of opinion, and we are greatly indebted for suggestions and information to many friends, especially to Messieurs Robert Doré, of the École des Chartes; Lucien Dubech, of the 'Revue Universelle'; Henri Martineau, editor of 'Le Divan'; Alphonse Mortier and Jacques Reynaud, of the 'Revue Critique des Idées et des Livres.'

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FRENCH LITERATURE DURING THE LAST HALF CENTURY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

For France, the war of 1870 was one of those crucial tests from which many a nation has emerged with a broken spirit, unable to regain the place it once held in the minds of other peoples and in its own esteem. The sinister skill with which Bismarck led his adversaries into the trap, the tyrannous cruelty with which he struck down his unhappy victim, the internal disorders which followed—all threatened irrecoverable disaster. France was humiliated by the loss of territory, and no longer able to exert in the councils of Europe the commanding influence she had enjoyed for centuries. She was robbed of industrial and financial resources necessary for her material development. She was kept for years in a position of isolation and driven to cultivate the friendship of Russia by investments which might have been better devoted to her own needs. But there was one thing which all the devices of Bismarck could not take away from her—the intellectual leadership of Europe and of the world. Bound or triumphant, France remained the Prometheus who brought light to men and taught them the arts of civilisation.

So France lost much in 1870, but she saved her soul. The dream that she was invincible was dissipated, and schemes of conquest were abandoned for ever. But the nation retained the self-respect which enables individuals and communities to endure, for it was felt that the reversal of fortune was more the fault of the national leaders at the moment than of the people at large. The Empire fell, but France remained, chastened by bitter experience, yet calm in her consciousness of the achievements of the past and confident in the promise of the future.

Political conditions, internal and external, were for a long time discouraging. The excesses of the Commune produced a Conservative reaction which might have resulted in the re-establishment of the monarchy, if the monarchist leaders had been prudent and skilful enough to take advantage of their opportunity. But the hour passed, and the Republic, based at first on somewhat insecure foundations, gradually won the support of the majority of the electors. Still, the political atmosphere was hardly favourable to high thinking. The endless debates on electoral machinery—whether votes should be cast according to *scrutin de liste* or *scrutin d'arrondissement*—were not calculated to arouse national enthusiasm, and the succession of such untoward events as the Panama scandal, the Boulangist fiasco, and the Dreyfus controversy depressed and confused the minds of the younger generation.

Only in the colonial field, in which Bismarck, for his own reasons, encouraged the aspirations of republican France, did events arouse patriotic enthusiasm and give definite assurance of future success. Tunis, Madagascar. and Tonkin offered an outlet for the spirit of adventure and opportunity for military experience which were not without practical utility; but the main value of the expansion of the French colonial empire was to restore, to some extent, the national confidence in the military prowess of the new conscripts and the ability of their leaders.

The blow was, however, too severe for the recovery from it to be anything but gradual. Indeed, some time passed before its effects can be said to have been clearly manifested in literature. The great men of letters before 1870—Hugo and Sully-Prudhomme in poetry; Flaubert and Edmond de Goncourt in fiction; Taine and Renan in criticism—continued to produce work of equal literary merit, and hardly different in character from what they had hitherto done, except perhaps that in subjects connected with politics or history a change of front may in some cases be discerned. Edmund Gosse, in a careful estimate of the effect of the war of 1870 on established French writers of the time, says:

> "We may say that the war caused a suspension in France of all literary composition of the higher kind during sixteen or seventeen months. But it is important to observe that this was a suspension, not a determination. On the face of a history of French literature in the nineteenth century the war of 1870–1 makes scarcely a scar. Even in the biographies of men of letters it is discovered only as a halting-place, not as a break in continuity. A long illness or a voyage round the world would compete with the war of 1870–1 in the mark it might make on the continuous production of a French poet of that age. Those who had private resourcs withdrew very carefully to their shelters, and sucked their paws like bears till the long winter of their discontent was over. In many cases the war stored up their talents, and concentrated their powers. In particular, it intensified their capacities. People who had loved the fatherland coldly in times of piping peace, blew the coals of their hearts up into a living flame, and the enchantment of France

reasserted itself. When the enemy was gone, they took up their work, on the old lines, but with threefold and fourfold zeal."

It was the younger men who suffered from the spiritual effects of the defeat, and even they show its influence in the tone and outlook of their work rather than in its quality or volume. The literary productivity of France as contrasted with the comparative sterility of her victorious rival is sufficiently striking. Indeed, the results support the view that France, owing to her misfortunes, enjoyed conditions peculiarly favourable to literary production during the decades immediately following 1870, as compared with the feverish commercial, military and naval activity of Germany, and the absorption of Great Britain in measures of industrial and political development. In France the best minds of the nation were perforce devoted to the high tasks of philosophy, science, art and literature. In the 'Letters of a Philosopher,' published by Professor B. Jacob about midway in the period, he says: "If our country can still play a brilliant part in the world, it is by its science, its art, its elegant craftsmanship, the excellence of its taste, the generosity of its manners, in brief, its hospitable qualities; outside of pacific activities, I see no future for us."

Such an enforced renunciation, however, carries with it its own penalty. France continued to be, perhaps more than ever, the main centre of literary and artistic influence; but the conditions which induced an intense devotion to the things of the mind also affected the spirit in which the work was done and the outlook of the intellectual worker upon life. The predominant feature of the intellectual world before 1870 was the rising power of physical science; to this the war gave a new impetus by its obvious insistence on the importance of material forces and the power of the mind as distinguished from that of the spirit. The positivism of Auguste Comte, the determinism of Taine, with his scientific formulas of heredity and environment, the realism of Flaubert and the brothers Goncourt cooperated with popularisations of Darwinism to extend the biological theory of evolution to every form of vital activity and to confound art with science. Zola's theory of the "experimental" novel is the most remarkable example of literary subservience to scientific method, and the objective method of Maupassant, especially in his earlier work, shows the same influence. It was far from being altogether the outcome of the war, but the war was one of the contributing elements in its development, partly in the way already suggested, and partly by encouraging the view that science rose above the limitations and humiliations of national sentiment. Gaston Paris is reported to have said at the Collège de France during the siege of Paris: "Science forms, above nationalities with their limited and often conflicting interests, a great mother-country on which no war can cast a stain."

Associated with this worship of the methods and attitude of physical science was the assumption of complete detachment from all except intellectual considerations. In the address from which we have already quoted, Gaston Paris said: "Science has no other object than the truth and the truth for its own sake, without any regard for the consequences, good or bad, regrettable or fortunate, that the truth may have in practice." The confidence thus expressed that by means of scientific methods the absolute truth may be attained is as striking as the inflexible disregard of all but intellectual processes. In temper and point of view it is a far cry from this saying to that of Bergson half a century later: "It has been said that the last word of philosophy was understanding without indignation; but if I had to choose, I should prefer in the face of a great crime to be indignant without understanding." In the interim the great writers, and especially the greatest of them all, Anatole France, often assumed an attitude of detachment which had neither the courage of the scientist nor the sympathy of the artist; they do not try to face the facts of life, but merely to cover their retreat in a brilliant display of intellectual dexterity. The illustrious professor of 'The Isle of the Penguins,' after a profound study of modern civilisation, sees no remedy but to amass enough dynamite to blow up this planet. "When its scattered fragments roll through space, an imperceptible improvement will be accomplished in the universe and satisfaction made to the universal conscience—which, moreover, does not exist." Anatole France's irony is never without a touch of pathos, and his disinclination to take anything seriously rests upon the assumption that the facts of life, regarded in their nakedness, are too horrible to bear discussion. Beneath the superficial gaiety and humour with which Maupassant recounts the odd incidents which diversify the dull round of human existence, the same fundamental pessimism is apparent. It is the outcome of the mood of discouragement and depression induced by the war in reflective minds. The fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge.

Anatole France apologizes, in a review of Maupassant's 'Notre Cœur,' republished in the fourth volume of 'La Vie Littéraire,' for the bitterness and depression of himself and his contemporaries. He says:

> "There is a strange harshness in contemporary thought. Our literature no longer believes in the goodness of things. Whether we listen to a dreamer like Loti, an intellectual like Bourget, or a sensualist like Maupassant, we hear in different tones the same words of disenchantment. We no longer see Mandane or Clélie triumphing by virtue over the weaknesses of the soul and the senses. The art of the seventeenth century believed in virtue, at least before Racine, who was the most audacious, the most terrible, and the truest of Naturalists, and perhaps from certain points of view the least moral. The art of the eighteenth century believed in reason. The art of the nineteenth century believed at first in passion, with Chateaubriand, Georges Sand, and the Romantics. Now, with the Naturalists, the art of the nineteenth century believes no longer in anything but instinct."

Bourget, in the preface to his 'New Essays of Contemporary Psychology' (1885), also testifies to the painful note of pessimism pervading the literature of his own and the preceding generation; he found everywhere the same impression of discouragement, "a mortal sense of fatigue in face of life, a dismal perception of the vanity of all effort." Bourget, Barrès and Maurras, each in his characteristic way, which we shall endeavour to explain in the later chapters, reacted from this mood of depression, but perhaps the main influence in restoring French thought to a healthier and more cheerful tone was that of Henri Bergson, whose work, though it belongs rather to philosophy than to literature, was so significant an element in the intellectual life of the latter part of the period as to call for a fuller examination than would otherwise fall within our province.

The extent of Bergson's influence is sufficiently indicated by the crowded attendance at his lectures, in France, in England, and in the United States, and the numerous editions of his works which have been issued in all three countries. In France, his first work of importance, 'Time and Free Will' (*Essai sur les Données immédiates de la Conscience*), which was originally published in 1889, went through half a dozen editions in the next ten years. This is not the place to discuss Bergson's philosophical method and the metaphysical implications of the distinction he makes between "concrete duration" and "abstract time." The literary and spiritual importance of his doctrine consists in his almost mystical assertion of free will, which in the preface to the 'Essai' he rightly sets forth as the problem he had chosen for discussion and which remains the central principle of his metaphysics, his psychology, and his ethics. At the end of this first book he says:

> "Freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act which it performs. This relation is indefinable, just because we *are* free. For we can analyse a thing, but not a process; we can break up extensity, but not duration. Or, if we persist in analysing it, we unconsciously transform the process into a thing and duration into extensity. By the very fact of breaking up concrete time we set out its moments in homogeneous space; in place of the doing we put the already done; and, as we have begun by, so to speak, stereotyping the activity of the self, we see spontaneity settle down into inertia and freedom into necessity. Thus, any positive definition of freedom will ensure the victory of determinism. . . .
>
> "To sum up: every demand for explanation in regard to free-

dom comes back, without our suspecting it, to the following question: 'Can time be adequately represented by space?' To which we answer: 'Yes, if you are dealing with time flown. No, if you speak of time flowing.' Now, the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not in time which has already flown. Freedom is therefore a fact, and among the facts which we observe there is none clearer. All the difficulties of the problem, and the problem itself, arise from the desire to endow duration with the same attributes as extensity, to interpret a succession by a simultaneity, and to express the idea of freedom in a language into which it is obviously untranslatable."

There is a striking contrast between this and the determinism of the leading teachers of the previous generation—Taine's "virtue and vice are products, like sugar and vitriol," and Berthelot's "science extends its fatalistic determinism to the moral world." Henri Poincaré, the great mathematician, led the way by pointing out that scientific formulæ are not ultimate truths, but convenient working hypotheses; and Bergson's incisive criticism of scientific methods and results was exceedingly effective in the same direction. The claim of his young disciple, René Gillouin, hardly goes too far—Bergson restored to man the consciousness of his dignity and his confidence in his destiny; he rescued metaphysics from impotence and degradation; he reopened the sources of spiritual life.

There has been much discussion as to the influence of Bergson in promoting a return to orthodox faith. The most open and decided advance he has made in that direction was in a letter to Father de Tonquédec published in 1912, in which after pointing out that the central idea of 'Time and Freewill' was "the fact of free will"; that of 'Matter and Memory,' "the reality of the soul"; and that of 'Creative Evolution,' "the fact of creation," the philosopher summarised as the conclusion of his whole teaching "the idea of a free creating God, the generator both of matter and of life, whose creative effort is continued on the side of life by the evolution of species and the constitution of human personalities." This, as compared with the mechanistic materialism of scientific dogma which characterised the previous generation, is a step toward revealed religion, but it is far from going all the way; and Bergson is not altogether well regarded by the Church, which distrusts his depreciation of the human intelligence. We should perhaps rather look to Brunetière, Lemaître, Bourget, Maurras, Claudel, Jammes, and Péguy as the leaders in the Catholic reaction which has undoubtedly taken place. It is, too, not merely a reaction from "atheistic science," but from the more extreme political ideas propounded under the names of socialism, syndicalism, anarchism and internationalism. The number of students professing Catholicism in the institutions of higher learning was reported to be increasing in the years before the Great War, but it was noted as the same time that there was no increase in the number of candidates for the priesthood. Some of the students professing themselves Catholics were no doubt such by conviction; the attitude of others is represented by one of them in these terms: "Catholicism is the form of religious belief in which I was born. Considering on the one hand that religion is a necessary element in every society, and on the other that religion can only be conceived for a people under a particular form, and that Catholicism is that form, I have been led to declare myself a Catholic." In so far as it rests upon these motives, the Catholic reaction must be regarded as a conservative, patriotic, nationalist and traditionalist movement, rather than as a religious one, in the sense in which English-speaking people ordinarily use the word.

The more specific literary influences of Bergson's teaching were less open to question. Zola had attempted to reduce literature to a science, and the task of the imaginative writer to that of the observer and recorder. Even Maupassant, who rejected this view of the novelist's art, laid great stress, both in theory and practice, on the value of careful observation, which he had learnt under the assiduous instruction of his master, Flaubert. Bergson's theory of intuition allows to artistic sympathy a mysterious force which found no place in scientific determinism or the literary schools founded upon it. In 'Creative Evolution' he distinguishes the æsthetic faculty from normal perception:

> "Our eye perceives the features of the living being, merely as assembled, not as mutually organized. The intention of life, the simple movement that runs through the lines, that binds them together and gives them significance, escapes it. This intention is just what the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model."

So, in an earlier passage (in 'Time and Free Will') he treats the relation between the artist and his work as a particular instance of the relation of the individual to an act springing from his whole personality.

> "It is an inaccurate psychology which will show us the soul determined by sympathy, aversion, or hate as though by so many forces pressing upon it. These feelings, provided that they go deep enough, each make up the whole soul, since the whole content of the soul is reflected in each of them. To

say that the soul is determined under the influence of any one of these feelings is thus to recognise that it is self-determined."

Bergson thus restores freedom to the artist as well as to the individual, and rescues him from the merely mechanical task of carefully observing and registering his observations. Imaginative literature is recognised as an act of spontaneous creation in which the personality of the author plays the principal part.

Bourget and Barrès freed themselves with greater difficulty and with more hesitation from the trammels of literary tradition, though the Barrès cult of the individual self has obvious parallels with Bergsonism. It was the younger generation that received the teaching of the new master with enthusiasm. It is too early to judge whether this new generation will produce works of imagination corresponding in tone, quality, and style to its aspirations, which are perhaps more active than literary, artistic, or contemplative. The 'Mercure de France,' setting forth the spirit of the young men of letters of 1892, said: "There has been no epoch more inclined than ours to cross its arms and do nothing. We belong to a dying world and it is becoming for us to die with it. The only decent thing is more than ever to take refuge in our ivory towers, while they are still standing—it is not for long—and dream there about the problems of eternity, or the niceties of style." The new spirit is entirely different. It is less discouraged, not at all inclined to withdraw from the practical business of life; it has "the taste for action," for sport, for "doing things." All this is to be welcomed as a saner and more wholesome view of life; but some have doubted whether it will tend to produce great literature. If the young people abandon their ivory towers, they may cease to concern themselves with the problems of eternity and the niceties of style. "Agathon," in his enlightening book on 'The Young People of Today' (1913), says: "In the work of Anatole France, so intelligent, so refined, but sustaining no faith, no love, not even a vigorous hate, they find nothing which satisfies their aspirations and their needs." At that one cannot be surprised; one may even rejoice at it, but at the same time one may wonder whether Anatole France will have successors who will combine his intellectual versatility and beauty of style with a more robust philosophy. The new generation is not only less literary, but less intellectual; the influence of Bergson, combined with the material pressure of a mechanical civilisation, has tended to discount not only intelligence, but intellectual interests. Fortunately the new movement has its more encouraging sides. If it has, to quote an impartial critic, "a moderate esteem for intellectualism, an imperious desire for action, a marked inclination for practical ends, a passionate fondness for sport," it has also "a lively faith in the future of France." This patriotic devotion, which has been greatly stimulated by the War, will no doubt find expression in various ways—first, in securing the national safety, which, in the modern world, must rest upon industrial progress and prosperity. But, the French being what they are, we cannot believe that they will neglect those higher activities which have given lasting distinction to their long and glorious history. It is sad to think of the many promising young writers who have been swept away by the War; but the new generation is full of hope and courage. The literature of the generation after 1870, wonderful as it is, is still the literature of a defeated and depressed people; the literature of the generation to come will, it may be hoped, retain the artistic qualities which distinguished the previous half-century of achievement and combine with them a new note of encouragement and enlightenment for mankind.

CHAPTER II

ÉMILE ZOLA (1840–1902)

"Zola! What an admirable name for advertising purposes; it sounds like the blare of a bugle," said a famous French journalist. Zola's career was a succession of bugle-blasts which aroused violent outbursts of feeling among his contemporaries, bitter attacks or overwhelming praise. Now that time has given us a clearer perspective, we are more able to judge impartially of the value of his work, of what in it may eventually endure.

Zola defined the novel as "a corner of nature seen through a temperament," and he himself was described by a critic as "a temperament hampered by a theory." In any case, it is worth while to examine what that temperament was, as created by ancestry and modified by life; his faithful biographer and friend, Edmond Lepelletier, has left us on this point the most accurate details.

Although born in Paris, where he spent nearly all his life, Zola was never a Parisian; racially he was a Latin of the Mediterranean coast, sturdy, thick-set, silent, stubborn like the Ligurians described by Strabo, as fundamentally different from the gay, noisy, gesticulating Southerners of Daudet's 'Tartarin de Tarascon' as he was from the elegant, witty, sceptical "Parisiens." His father, François Zola, was of mixed ancestry, Italian on one side, on the other Dalmatian and Greek; an artillery officer in the army of Napoleon I, he became an engineer after the fall of the Empire, and after many adventures, some of them not altogether to his credit, settled down in the aristocratic and sleepy little city of Aix-en-Provence. After a long struggle against the inertia of the inhabitants, he succeeded in interesting the Government in a local irrigation enterprise, and, in 1847, just as he could see fortune and fame within reach, he died of pleurisy in a hotel in Marseilles. During one of his frequent trips to Paris he had met Mlle. Émilie Aubert, twenty years his junior, attractive and poor, a little bourgeoise, close-fisted, full of common sense, home-loving—traits that she transmitted to her son Émile. François Zola left his widow little beside debts and ruinous litigation with contractors, which absorbed her time so completely that her son was left very much to his own devices, and the occasional care of his grandmother. He was very backward; at seven he could hardly read. In 1858 his mother returned to Paris, and his education was continued at the Lycée Saint Louis, but he was an indifferent student, absent-minded in class, and did not succeed in obtaining his bachelor's degree. Out of college at twenty, he was a perfect example of the classic type of young bohemian illustrated by Mürger; unwilling to undertake any sort of regular work, he dreamed of gaining a living by poetry and drama. His power of creation developed very slowly, for up to 1861 he had written only one poem, 'L'Aérienne.' But one has to live, and after a few months' employment in a warehouse, which he hated, he obtained a position as clerk with the great publishing house of Hachette. The salary was small, but the surroundings were congenial, and, soon transferred to the Department of Publicity, Zola was in daily contact with authors, journalists and critics, making thus many useful acquaintances in the great world of letters. He devoted all his spare time to writing, and on the advice of the elder Hachette decided to concentrate his efforts on fiction. A volume of short stories, which was entitled 'Contes à Ninon,' an evident reminiscence of Musset, had a limited success, but opened to Zola the doors of newspapers and periodicals in which he published a number of articles on art and literature, reproduced later in book form under the title of 'Mes Haines.'

In 1865 Zola published his first novel, 'La Confession de Claude.' Shortly afterwards, he gave up his position at Hachette's, and spent a stormy and unsuccessful year in journalism as a critic of literature and art. In 1866 his 'Thérèse Raquin' appeared under the title of 'Histoire d'Amour.' In this we see the beginning of the theories which were later on to be fully developed in the 'Rougon-Macquart' series. "I had one single desire," said Zola, in the preface to the second edition. "I imagined a strong man and an unbridled woman, sought in them the beast, saw nothing but the beast; I threw them into a turmoil of passions, and noted scrupulously the sensations, actions and reactions of these two human beings. I simply performed on these two living bodies the analytical work that the surgeons perform on corpses." The book caused violent polemics, but had a very limited sale.

During the Franco-German war, Zola, who had just married, went to Marseilles, and for a time was in very straitened circumstances; books were no longer published, newspapers were not flourishing, and he had no other income than that of his pen. He organized a paper, 'La Marseillaise,' which lasted only a few weeks, and then went to Bordeaux to obtain work from the Government of National Defence. After holding some small appointments, he obtained rather lucrative newspaper work and finished 'La Fortune des Rougon,' the publication of which had been stopped by the war. This book again fell flat.

'La Curée,' begun before the war, was finished in 1872, and began to appear in 'La Cloche.' It caused a scandal, and the Government law officer warned the author that action would be taken if the publication in serial form was continued, but not if the story were published as a book. Zola complied with the order, perhaps wrongly, for a prosecution is usually an excellent advertisement. About this time, however, he made advantageous arrangements with the enterprising young publisher, Georges Charpentier, who treated Zola generously and enabled him to live comfortably. 'La Curée,' 'Le Ventre de Paris,' 'La Conquête de Plassans,' 'La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret' and 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon' were all published in book form between 1872 and 1876.

But the talent shown in these first six volumes of the great series he had planned had not conquered opinion; Zola was not famous; the great public ignored him. After 'La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret' he was classed among the poets in prose whom nobody reads, and after 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon' among the tiresome authors that no one buys; if he had died at this time, he would have remained buried with minor authors in the depths of the Encyclopædia. One wonders how he was able to find a paper bold enough to take the risk of publishing 'L'Assommoir.' A combination of chance circumstances permitted it.

About 1875 or 1876 some young scientists and artists had founded a review called 'Réalisme.' Their aim was to introduce the experimental method into everything from philosophy and sociology to art and literature. They called their group "The Mutual Autopsy," and were supposed to examine the brain of every deceased member. Broca was the president of the association, and Yves Guyot, of 'Le Bien Public,' one of the members. Zola wrote the theatrical page of this paper and knew several members of 'L'Autopsie.' A study of the neuropathic manifestations of alcoholism was certainly of such a nature as to interest the group. 'L'Assommoir' appeared in 'Le Bien Public' in 1876. Very soon it caused such protests from the subscribers that M. Ménier, the chocolate maker, financial backer of the paper, was frightened and stopped its publication. Catulle Mendès agreed to resume it in a little literary review which he directed, 'La République des Lettres.' Then the storm broke loose; everybody fell upon Zola; 'L'Assommoir' was immoral, said the bourgeois; it was an insult to the people, affirmed the publicists; but these attacks were excellent advertising and the sales went higher and higher, probably for reasons that would not bear close investigation. 'L'Assommoir' made Zola's fortune.

After publishing in 1878 'Une Page d'Amour' (which is much less a study of love than a study of the influence of the child on the life of his parents) Zola bought his villa at Médan. He loved the country, but undoubtedly preferred the sophisticated nature of the suburbs. Médan is on the edge of the suburbs, near the open country but not in it. At the beginning the villa was a very modest dwelling, for which Zola paid only nine thousand francs, but by and by it developed into a cross between a "maison bourgeoise" and a "château." Zola had always been a "romantic" at heart, and he gave free rein to his taste for cheap bric-à-brac; his study was crowded with Japanese and Chinese embroideries, imitation furniture of the fifteenth century, panoplies of arms, probably bought in department stores. According to some of his friends, it was the acme of bad taste, but it was the delight of its owner. Médan soon became the rendezvous of his friends and of the young men who admired his talent. There gathered the Five: Guy de Maupassant, Léon Hennique, Paul Alexis, Céard, and Huysmans, and the result of one of their festive meetings was 'Les Soirées de Médan' (1880), which contains such masterpieces as 'L'Attaque du Moulin' by Zola, and 'Boule de Suif,' which made Maupassant famous overnight. Zola went on with his work tirelessly. 'Nana,' the life-story of a courtesan, was followed by 'Pot-Bouille,' 'Au Bonheur des Dames,' 'La Joie de Vivre,' 'Germinal,' 'L'Œuvre,' a study of artist life, and then 'La Terre' (1887), one of the most brutal of Zola's works. Its exaggerated bestialities caused widespread protest. Some young authors of the realistic school gave vent to their dissatisfaction in a letter which has remained famous in French literature under the title of 'Manifeste des Cinq' (not to be confused with the Five above mentioned)—Paul Bonnetain, J. H. Rosny, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte, Gustave Guiches. In view of the kind of books that some of the manifestants published later, this outcry appears rather ludicrous, but it is nevertheless significant of the feeling that prevailed at the time.

As if anxious to produce a strong contrast, Zola next published 'Le Rêve,' in which for the first time he tried to express mysticism—a rather fleshly mysticism, it must be confessed. After 'La Bête Humaine,' a railroad novel, came 'L'Argent,' a study of high finance, obviously inspired from the collapse of the bank, "L'Union Générale." Then another shock was due, and it came in 'La Débâcle,' a story of the disastrous war of 1870, which aroused more bitterness than any other of Zola's books, probably through misunderstanding. Zola was accused of dragging the army in the mire, although his intentions were most likely the direct opposite.

'Dr. Pascal,' which ends the Rougon-Macquart series, is quite different from the other works, just as its doctor hero is different from his terrible ancestors. Between 1893 and 1897 Zola wrote his Trilogy of 'Les Trois Villes'—'Lourdes,' 'Rome' and 'Paris'—three very long books of inferior interest.

Up to this time Zola had lived and worked very much in seclusion; he shunned crowds, and had none of the habits of the man-about-town. He had never been lionised by society people, as many of his brother writers had. Politics seemed to have no interest for him; but an unexpected event threw him into that turmoil of passions which shook France at the end of the last century: the Dreyfus Affair. Captain Dreyfus had been arrested on October 15, 1894, sentenced the following December, and deported to Devil's Island. Zola took no part whatever in the first act of the Affair. The friends of Dreyfus were at work to obtain his rehabilitation; they collected documents tending to prove that he was the victim of a plot. Probably it was through Bernard Lazare, the author, that Zola received his first information on the subject. The disclosure of M. Scheurer-Kestner, Vice-President of the Senate, brought about the prosecution of Esterhazy, who was unanimously acquitted on January 12, 1898. The next day in 'L'Aurore' appeared the famous 'Letter to the President of the Republic,' better known under the name of 'J'Accuse.' It may be said that this Letter, in which Zola attacked personally by name a number of the most prominent chiefs of the French army, shifted the whole Affair from one plane to another. Up to that time, the attempt was to obtain redress for a judicial error, and charges were made against individuals but not against classes and organizations. Zola's Letter seemed to many to put the army as such on trial, and somehow the Church became also involved; hence the intensity of feeling, the bitterness of the fight. The personality of Dreyfus was practically obliterated; France was divided into two camps, which summarised their positions in two short Latin sentences: for the Dreyfusists, "Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum," for their opponents, "De minimis non curat lex." Zola was thrown into the thickest of the mêlée and his personality was not spared. He was dropped from the list of the Legion of Honour, condemned by the Court of the Seine to one year in jail with a fine of three thousand francs, and on appeal this sentence was confirmed by the Tribunal of Versailles, this time by default. Zola had fled to England, where he remained for some time. His letters are interesting for their total lack of understanding of the Anglo-Saxons. During this period he began writing 'The Four Gospels,' 'Fecundity,' 'Truth,' 'Work,' and 'Justice,' professedly corresponding to the Evangelists of the New Testament. But Zola's Gospel was really that according to Tolstoy, with a strong flavour of his own romantic temperament. 'Fécondité' is the story of a peasant couple blessed (or cursed) with an incredibly large family. The aim of the book was no doubt to encourage childbearing, but it might also be interpreted as an incitement to race-suicide. 'Travail' is another fairy tale in which the world is shaped according to socialistic ideals, not according to facts. 'Vérité' is a lengthy and one-sided account of the Dreyfus case. 'Justice' was never written.

Zola, who was essentially a bourgeois, fond of comfort and good living, had been thrown toward socialism, probably by the bitterness of the fight he waged in the Dreyfus Affair. On the other hand, he had always been inclined to preach, and these last three volumes are enlarged and romanticised sermons. "Nothing can stay the downfall of existing society," said he, "the old edifice is crumbling to pieces; everyone admits it, not only the theorists of socialism, but also the champions of the bourgeois system. Christianity caused a revolution which upset the Roman world by the suppression of slavery and the substitution for it of the salary system. It was an immense progress, for it lifted the masses to the dignity of free men. In the present struggle between capital and labour, labour will finally triumph; but which road will the people follow? To whom will they listen? I do not know! My visions of a better future when men will live in perfect union and complete solidarity are not, do not aim to be, a rigorous doctrine; they are Utopia, but now-a-days people say that what is Utopia to-day will be truth to-morrow." The last three books by Zola are very Utopian.

Zola was many times a candidate for the French Academy, but was never elected. Probably encouraged by the example of Lamartine and Hugo, who both had a political career, he wished for a time to be a candidate for the Legislature. A seat was offered him in the Fifth District of Paris; after much hesitation, he declined. He died on September 28, 1902, asphyxiated in his bedroom by the fumes of carbon acid gas coming from a defective furnace. In 1908, his remains were transferred by order of the French Government to the vault of the Panthéon.

Zola was not a man of broad culture, his verse is of little value, and although always attracted by the stage, he failed miserably every time he attempted to write a play alone. 'Thérèse Raquin' (1873) had seven representations; 'Les Héritiers Rabourdin' (1874), sixteen; 'Le Bouton de Rose,' a comedy, was hissed off the stage at the first performance. On the other hand, plays taken from his novels had often very long runs; the most successful dramatisation was that of 'L'Assommoir,' which came to be welcomed in some quarters as a powerful plea for prohibition.

It is in the 'Rougon-Macquart' series—'The Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire'—that we shall find the best as well as the worst there is in Zola; what will endure as literature, and may eventually become classic. It was toward 1868 that the general plan of this enormous work took definite shape in Zola's mind. The preface to Taine's 'History of English Literature' gave him the key to his general theory, the scientific basis of which he found in 'La Physiologie des Passions' of Létourneau and the 'Traité de l'Hérédité Naturelle' of Dr. Lucas. His aim was to write, as he explained later in 'Le Roman Expérimental,' "the impersonal novel in which the novelist is nothing but a recorder of facts, who has no right to judge or form conclusions; who, like the scientist, must restrict himself to the scrupulous study of Nature; who keeps his emotions to himself: for a novelist who is indignant with vice or applauds virtue ruins his documents; he confuses reality with emotion, which is subject to every kind of prejudice and error. A novelist must be only a scientist, an analyst, an anatomist, and his work must have the certainty, the solidity, and the practical application of a work of science."

The plan of the 'Rougon-Macquart' series no doubt owes something to Balzac's 'Comédie Humaine.' On the other hand, Zola's scheme was far more definite, and claimed to be based on scientific principles. To take his own words, he "had selected a central family against which two other families were to react." He wished to depict the development of this family in all the different classes of modern society. The Second Empire had seen a tremendous outburst of conflicting ambitions, appetites and interests. The old world was dying and dying hard, and the new one was still in the making, groping for light. This gave him his background. As nearly all families sprout from the soil, that is to say from the provinces, he decided that his first volume should have a provincial town, Aix, the home of his childhood, as its setting; the others would be located in Paris, the intellectual, political, financial centre of the country. The total work was intended to comprise twenty volumes, and has, in fact, twenty; but the first list of subjects he made contained only ten of these, and was not strictly adhered to. He drew up at that time the family tree which was published eight years later at the beginning of 'Une Page d'Amour,' and was laughed at by the critics, who considered it a belated explanation. The original family tree does not tally in every detail with the completed work; in spite of his professions of scientific accuracy, Zola exercised a romantic license in varying at will the offspring of the family he had created.

The Rougon-Macquarts are scattered over different social levels from the last days of the Second Republic of 1848 up to 1870. They belong to all classes: Zola shows us in turn the peasant, the cabinet minister, the insurgent, the workman, the miner, the bourgeois, the speculator, the railroad engineer, the artist, the soldier, the clerk, the scientist, and among the women the sophisticated society leader, the business woman, the worker's wife, the housemaid, the courtesan, and so on.

The Rougons are the central family; the Macquarts disappear very soon, for only the daughters play important parts. From these daughters spring two families, the Mourets and the Lantiers. The Rougons are a powerful race; their checkered careers are as a whole successful, although marred by undercurrents of family disaster; they are statesmen, captains of industry, thinkers; they are the heroes of 'La Fortune des Rougon,' 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon,' 'La Conquête de Plassans,' 'La Curée,' 'L'Argent,' 'Le Docteur Pascal.' The Mourets are plain bourgeois: only one of them, Octave Mouret, the principal character of 'Pot-Bouille' and 'Au Bonheur des Dames,' climbs to heights of considerable prosperity, as the promoter of a gigantic department store; some of them, rather more normal than the rest, are lovable, the abbé Serge Mouret of 'La Faute,' Hélène and Jeanne of 'Une Page d'Amour,' Silvère, lover of the poetic Miette, in 'La Fortune des Rougon.' The Lantiers represent the working classes: doubly tainted by illegitimacy, most of them are abnormal, alcoholic, half insane; they are the heroes of the most striking books of the series. Their mother, Gervaise of 'L'Assommoir,' is a Macquart; before her marriage with Coupeau, three sons are born to her from a liaison with Auguste Lantier: Claude, the artist of 'L'Œuvre,' Jacques, the railroad engineer of 'La Bête Humaine,' Etienne, the miner of 'Germinal.' Of Gervaise's marriage with Coupeau is born Anne, the courtesan of 'Nana.' Lisa, the eldest daughter of Antoine Macquart and Josephine Gévaudan, marries the pork-butcher, Quenu-Gradelle, and becomes the Junoesque heroine of 'Le Ventre de Paris.' Their daughter, Pauline, is the absolute opposite of her mother's gross and worldly appetites, and is the principal character of 'La Joie de Vivre,' a story of self-sacrifice and tireless charity.

Jean Macquart, a lovable jack-of-all-trades, in turn carpenter, soldier, farmer, and again soldier, is the slender link that binds 'La Terre' and 'La Débâcle' to the Rougon-Macquart series, for in both books he is little more than an episodical character; in 'La Terre' the peasant family, the Fouans, and in 'La Débâcle' the army, considered as a whole, are respectively the central figures.

Angélique, illegitimate daughter of Sydonie Rougon, is the heroine of 'Le Rêve,' which is not otherwise connected with the other books of the series, from which it is entirely different in tone and method. It was probably written to counteract the scandal caused by the previous volumes and open to the author the doors of the Academy.

Some of the characters are to be found either as heroes or as background characters in several volumes. For instance, Eugène Rougon appears in 'La Fortune des Rougon,' 'La Curée,' 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon,' 'L'Argent' and 'Le Docteur Pascal'; Octave Mouret, in 'La Fortune des Rougon,' 'La Conquête de Plassans,' 'La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret,' 'La Joie de Vivre,' 'Pot-Bouille,' 'Au Bonheur des Dames,' 'L'Œuvre,' and 'Le Docteur Pascal.'

The literary critic may wade through the whole of Zola as a painful duty; one can hardly imagine any reader doing it for pleasure. The later romances, which stand apart from the main series, may be safely neglected; and nothing is lost in omitting 'Nana' and 'La Terre.' 'La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret,' 'Une Page d'Amour,' and 'Le Rêve' offer a selection with a minimum of offence. Those who want the more typical Zola will find it in 'L'Assommoir,' 'L'Œuvre,' 'La Bête Humaine,' and 'Germinal.' 'La Débâcle' may be read with advantage as an epic, not as accurate history.

Zola's contributions to literary theory were much more important than his artistic achievements. Balzac had already welded together the different anterior tendencies of the French novel. Sir Walter Scott's historical romance, Marivaux's novel of manners, Lesage's novel of character, Rousseau's philosophical novel, are all fused in the monumental 'Comédie Humaine,' "the faithful image of contemporary life, in which 'milieux' as well as individuals are expressed through their reciprocal reactions." The way was clear for the advent of a new form. Flaubert, with his care for precise description, his disregard of former conventions, would probably deserve the name of the first of the realists had he not remained, in spite of all, a Romantic. As Paul Margueritte said: "He was one of the strongest links of a marvellous chain which joins the present to the past; he continued the tradition of the past and embodied the promise of the future." With the brothers Goncourt, principally Edmond, the tendency toward realism grows. Zola might have followed in their footsteps without claiming the invention of a new form, but this did not suit his theoretical turn of mind. Impressed by the determinism of Taine, which he more or less misunderstood, interested in the work of the physiologists of the first half of the nineteenth century, he expounded his own theory of the novel in articles gathered later into a book, 'Le Roman Expérimental.'

For Zola the novelist is not merely an observer but a maker of experiments. The observer provides the facts as he has observed them, fixes the starting point, builds the solid ground on which the personages are going to walk and the phenomena to develop. Then the maker of experiments begins his work, makes the personages act within the confines of the plot in order to show that the succession of facts will occur as preordained by the determinism of the phenomena.

Claude Bernard had said: "The maker of experiments is the examining magistrate of nature." Zola in his turn affirms that "the novelist is the examining magistrate of man and his passions." And further: "We continue through our observations and experiments the work of the physiologist, who himself continues the work of the physicist and of the chemist. We must deal with characters, passions, human and social facts, as the chemist and physiologist deal with human bodies."

The fallacy of this pseudo-scientific theory is obvious; there is nothing accurate and scientific in fiction. Zola asks questions just as the bacteriologist observing new bacilli through a microscope does, but in the latter case Nature answers, and in the former Zola's imagination. The results he obtains thus have no objective existence; they are not really facts, but affirmations pure and simple, which anyone may believe or disbelieve according to his own fancy. Moreover, this theory applies mechanistic conceptions to biological phenomena, and omits entirely the element of will; it confuses scientific investigation of facts with the task of the novelist, who deals with imagined persons and incidents. The expression "experimental novel" is ill-chosen, for it is inaccurate and misleading; "naturalistic" is hardly better; "realistic" would be a more appropriate expression. But there were realists, forerunners of the Naturalists of today, before Flaubert and Balzac: Diderot, La Chaussée, Restif de la Bretonne, to whom Zola has been frequently compared. "Restif, in truth, aimed higher than to write salacious stories; he considered himself a sort of reformer, endeavouring to furnish useful supplements to Buffon's natural history. The author of 'Nana,' after all, tried to continue Claude Bernard very much in the same way as the author of 'La Paysanne Pervertie' continued Buffon." Paul de Koch, fallen into undeserved discredit, was a realist after his fashion, and so was Duranty; Henry Monnier, the creator of the immortal 'Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme,' that prototype of the bourgeois of the nineteenth century, copied by all the dramatists of the period from Labiche to Feydeau, was perhaps the purest realist of them all. Zola's distinction was not in the practice of a new form of art or the invention of a new method, but in forcing the issue between romance and realism on the attention of the literary world.

The realistic novel ought to be real, true to life; does Zola's work fulfil that condition? Hardly. Although he tells us that he always had recourse to three different sources of information—books, witnesses, and direct observation—we know that, save for books and newspapers, his documentation was always more or less sketchy. He was a home-loving and home-keeping man, chained by necessity to his writing desk. He travelled little and mixed little with society apart from his own literary and artistic set. In many cases his documentation is only second hand or hearsay. For instance, the details of the insurrection of 1852 in Provence ('La Fortune des Rougon') were borrowed from Ténot's 'Histoire du Coup d'État;' to depict in 'La Curée' the society circles of the Second Empire, of which he was absolutely ignorant, he had to interview carriage-makers, decorators, dressmakers, etc.; the descriptions of plants in 'La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret' were partly furnished by horticulturists' and nurserymen's catalogues; 'Les Souvenirs d'un Valet de Chambre' gave him the setting of the Court of Compiègne in 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon;' for 'Nana,' the only information he possessed on the life of a courtesan "de haute marque" had been obtained at a lunch with an actress of the "Variétés," who happened to be entirely proper and conventional; for 'L'Assommoir' he took some of the vocabulary of the characters and even of the scenes from 'Le Sublime' (the workman as he is and as he might be), by Denis Poulot. Many such examples could be cited, not to mention what he borrowed from his collection of newspaper clippings. There was no plagiarism in this; Zola got information where he could find it, and his remarkable gift of assimilation allowed him to digest his material so perfectly as to preclude all accusations of unlawful borrowing. But it remains none the less evident that descriptions thus based lack not only the element of personal experience but also that of scientific accuracy. Moreover, although professing to describe the epoch of the Second Empire, he did not hesitate to include in his novels events which happened long after, such as the collapse of the Bank "L'Union Générale," which he places in 'L'Argent,' and the "Barrème affair," which is part of the plot of 'La Bête Humaine.' In 'L'Œuvre' he shows us "rapins" of 1830; all his types of workmen belong not to 1865 but to 1885, and there is a vast difference between these periods.

On the other hand, Zola chose to make use of abnormal characters. The writer of romance has to choose exceptional situations in order to interest the reader, since every-day events are unattractive and do not compel attention; but the characters, at least the great majority of them, have to be normal, plain, healthy people if the work is to have some semblance of reality. In Zola's books we find such a collection of degenerates that we are unwilling to admit that his "milieu" is true to life. Insanity, drunkenness, idiocy, murder, theft, arson, rape, adultery, illegitimacy exist in this world, and the novelist may mention them, even discuss them at length, when the occasion requires it, but they are not the norm of life, and a family in which such happenings are common is no more typically French than it is typically human. In his desire not to shrink from painful facts, Zola has distorted life to the point of achieving not truth but a nightmare.

What was Zola's mode of treating the data thus amassed? Even if he had a general idea of what he meant his novel to be, his plan was rather vague, and changed several times in accordance with new information gathered; the result is that most often he has no plot in the usual meaning of the word. There is no carefully prepared climax; anticlimaxes are many and frequently disheartening for the reader, who sees the book, which really ought to end then and there, start on a new tack. This might have been done purposely, for such is life, but we know that it was not.

The material arrangement of some books is, however, very regular and even formal, with leading motives recurring at stated intervals. In some there is a rhythm: 'Une Page d'Amour' is divided into five parts of five chapters each, with a description of Paris at a different hour of the day at the end of each part.

Style is perhaps what differentiates Zola most completely from Flaubert, the Goncourts and Daudet. He ignores the refinements of "l'écriture artiste"; his syntax is often faulty, his construction involved, his adjectives and adverbs inaccurate; he indulges in disagreeable repetitions; but in spite of these obvious faults the language corresponds to the subject and produces the impression the author wished to obtain. He gave himself this advice about his own style: "Watch the style. More adjectives. An emphatic turn. But always heat and passion. A roaring torrent, but broad and flowing majestically." Jean Lionnet remarks on the same subject nearly in the same terms: "He gives to his long tirades the even motion of a flowing river." "His style, invariable and harsh, suits the story of unchangeable and uncouth characters." Sometimes he attains to heights of lyricism in pages of poetic prose which move the reader in spite of himself. But his most conspicuous gift is in the handling of crowds in motion. The battles in 'La Débâcle' are infinitely more impressive than those of George Meredith's 'Vittoria.' "To make his characters swarm was the task he set himself from the first; that was the secret he triumphantly mastered," was very justly said by Henry James. On the other hand, he was totally lacking in humour, and consequently his dialogue is not only ineffective but often intolerably tiresome.

Exaggeration is probably his most noticeable fault; when he describes for us the "Halles" of Paris, we have the impression that they constitute in themselves a city of several hundred thousand souls. He inherited this from the Romanticists, for in spite of his efforts he never ceased to remain one of them. There was in his mind a perpetual conflict between the poet whose temperamental imagination distorted all the facts he observed and the theorist of the experimental novel whose only object was supposed to be careful study of life and its accurate reproduction; temperament generally prevailed over theory.

One result of this theory of the observation and reproduction of purely external facts is that Zola has no psychology; his explanations of characters are physiological; looking at his personages only from one angle—the physical—he suppresses half the truth; as he studies only the human beast, he cannot help being a pessimist. In 'Les Trois Villes' and 'Les Quatre Évangiles' his point of view seems greatly altered; he inclines towards an optimism founded on faith in progress; the romanticist has become a sort of apostle of science and the brotherhood of man; but he remains thoroughly materialistic.

In spite of all this—perhaps in part because of it—Zola's influence has been considerable, both in France and abroad. He was the standard bearer of "Naturalism," and his theories had for a time a sway it is difficult to explain, now that their fallacies are laid bare. Those of his literary disciples, such as Maupassant and Huysmans, who freed themselves to a greater or less extent from the Zola fascination, derived from it the greater benefit; it extended for them the limits of literary convention, and they avoided Zola's doctrinaire and narrow point of view. Strong as it was, his influence did not last; very few authors of the younger generation accept his theory, though they may have profited by the discussion he aroused. His authority seems to have been proportionately greater, or at least more lasting, in foreign lands. In Italy, Capuana, Verga, d'Annunzio, were subjected to it; in Spain, Blasco Ibáñez and Pio Baroja; in Germany, Arno Holz, Hauptmann, and Wedekind. In England, Zola's literature received at first a doubtful welcome; the English courts sent Henry Vizetelly to jail for three months for publishing a translation of 'La Terre'; Meredith scoffed at Naturalism in his novels and his letters; Tennyson inveighed against it in his poetry. Yet Zola's work was by no means without influence, notably on the novels of Gissing and George Moore, and to a modified extent on those of later writers. The sexual obsession of some of Thomas Hardy's books, notably 'Jude the Obscure,' may be, in the main, characteristic of the author, who was largely independent of literary influences, but the authority and example of Zola cannot be left altogether out of account. The same is true of the later English realists, such as Arnold Bennett, Compton Mackenzie, Gilbert Cannan, D. H. Lawrence and W. L. George.

Zola's place in the history of literary influences is secure beyond question; it is much more difficult to say whether any of his work will hold a permanent place in French literature; maybe one of his great workmen stories, 'L'Assommoir' or 'Germinal,' in spite of the dross they contain; more likely some selected extracts of poetic prose, some historical scenes, such as the episode of the battle of Sedan, the defence of the house of Weiss, the Alsatian, in the village of Bazeilles, which ought to be found in every anthology, not of prose writers but of poets. For Zola was not a Naturalist, at least as he himself defined the word; he was not a great novelist; at his best he was, as Jules Lemaître said, "a poet, an epic poet, a pessimistic poet," in the sense not of a man writing verse, but of a writer gifted with a romantic imagination who endows his vision with the glow of life —a far greater achievement than the aim of scientific accuracy which he so ardently advocated and so laboriously strove to attain.

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TRANSLATIONS

The Rougon-Macquart series may be read in the Vizetelly translation in the following order, according to the chronological sequence of the various plots. The dates at which the translations were published are given in brackets:—

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'His Excellency' (1897).
'The Rush for the Spoil' (1885).
'Money' (1894).
'The Dream' (1907).
'The Conquest of Plassans (1900).
'Piping-Hot (Pot-Bouille)' (1889).
'The Ladies' Paradise' (1895).
'Abbé Mouret's Transgression' (1900).
'A Love Episode' (1895).
'The Fat and the Thin (Le Ventre de Paris)' (1895).
'The Joy of Life' (1901).
'The Dramshop (L'Assommoir)' (1902).
'Nana' (1884).
'His Masterpiece' (1902).
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'Germinal' (1901).
'The Soil' (1888).
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CHAPTER III

GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850–1893)

MAUPASSANT affords (always provided that one does not forget the central fact of his original genius) an excellent example of the application of Taine's formula, "la race," "le moment," "le milieu." His father came of a family originally of Lorraine, but settled in Normandy since the middle of the eighteenth century. His mother was of a more ancient Norman family, and it was in Normandy that he passed most of his childhood and youth. Under the easy-going guardianship of his mother (who had separated from her husband) he roamed the country-side between Étretat and Fécamp or made short voyages off the coast, becoming the close friend of peasants and fishermen, whose dialect he acquired together with something of the shrewdness and hardness of their view of life. It was in Normandy that he went to school at Yvetot and Rouen, and in Normandy that he served during his brief military experience of the war of 1870.

The next ten years Maupassant spent as a clerk in the Civil Service at Paris. Much of his leisure was given to boating on the Seine, to which he was passionately addicted, even to an excess that perhaps injured his health; but the main literary significance of this period was the prolonged and severe artistic apprenticeship he served to Flaubert, who up to the time of his death in 1880—

which coincided with the establishment of Maupassant's literary reputation—gave the young author a training almost without parallel in the annals of the writer's craft. An exacting judge of his own productions, Flaubert was hardly less so in his criticisms of the youthful efforts of Maupassant, in whom he was first interested by a long-established family friendship. A commanding figure in the world of letters, he had little difficulty in securing for his young protégé the social and literary relations likely to be most advantageous, and he spared no pains in opening to Maupassant the portals which a young author often finds it so hard even to approach. Literary patrons, political and social leaders, dramatic producers, publishers, editors, critics were all solicited by the veteran novelist on behalf of Maupassant, who was entirely appreciative of the good offices rendered him by the older man, and paid diligent heed to his counsels of perfection and his exhortations to hard work. Maupassant, who was always fonder of life than of books and had his full share of the exuberance of youth, had little natural inclination for the labour of the file, and was still uncertain as to whither his literary ambitions were tending. He wrote light verse with facility, and his first book 'Des Vers' (1880) was a collection of narrative poems admirably calculated to shock the respectable middle class which was at that time the favorite butt of literary circles; in fact, some of them so far transgressed the bounds of propriety that a prosecution would have been directed against them on grounds of public morals if Flaubert had not exercised his influence to stop the suit in its inception, though he was careful to secure for the young author all the advantages of the advertisement. Maupassant also dashed off extravagant farces which were acted privately, to the great delight of his bohemian friends and the scandal of the more staid; his more serious dramatic work had no success. He was, however, making his mark as a journalist, and learning, under the constant direction and tutorship of Flaubert, the art and craft of the writer of fiction. In the preface to 'Pierre et Jean,' Maupassant has told how his "irreproachable master" trained his faculties of observation and expression.

> "'When you pass a grocer sitting in his doorway,' he would say 'a porter smoking his pipe, or a cab stand, show me that grocer and that porter, their attitude and their whole physical aspect, including, as indicated by the skill of the portrait, their whole moral nature, in such a way that I could never mistake them for any other grocer or porter; and by a single word give me to understand wherein one cab horse differs from fifty others before or behind it.'"

Flaubert's idea of style stood in close relation to his "theory of observation"; both rested in fact upon a saying he was fond of quoting to Maupassant: "Talent is nothing but long patience." Like Boileau, Flaubert held that the right word in the right place could express anything:

> "Whatever the thing we wish to say, there is but one word to express it, but one verb to give it movement, but one adjective to qualify it. We must seek till we find this noun, this verb, and this adjective, and never be content with getting very near it, never allow ourselves to play tricks, even happy ones, or have recourse to sleights of language to avoid a difficulty."

There can be no question that Maupassant learnt his lesson. At the end of his seven years' apprenticeship he had acquired a power of expression superior to that of his master, who continued to castigate his own style at the expense of an enormous toil, while Maupassant wrote an easy and vigorous prose, perhaps a little hard in its brilliance, but perfect of its kind. As a rule, he corrected little, being usually content with his first version, but he gave his manuscript careful revision, and when, towards the end of his career, he attempted in 'Fort Comme la Mort' "a vision of life, terrible, tender, desperate" and had to suggest things rather than to say them, he worked over his original version, especially the crucial phrases, again and again. The final sentence of this novel was recast four times—always in the direction of a simpler musical cadence—before the author was satisfied with it.

Writing about Maupassant in 'Partial Portraits' (1888), Henry James said: "Nothing can exceed the masculine firmness, the quiet force of his style, in which every phrase is a close sequence, every epithet a paying piece, and the ground is completely cleared of the vague, the ready-made and the second best. Less than anyone today does he beat the air; more than anyone does he hit out from the shoulder." Henry James gave due credit to Flaubert for placing Maupassant in possession of an adequate means of expression, but he pointed out also that Maupassant is "a striking illustration—of the practical advantage of having a first rate ability." Flaubert contributed generously and effectively to the development of Maupassant's genius, but the genius was there to be developed.

In 1875, 1877, and 1878 Maupassant published in obscure journals two or three short stories which he did not include, in their original form, in his collected work; 'Le Docteur Heraclius Gloss' written between 1875 and 1877, and not printed till 1921 (in the 'Revue de Paris'), indicated that he exercised a wise discretion in refusing to publish this early work during his lifetime; he tried in 1877 to write a novel, which seems to have come to nothing. The decisive turn in his literary fortunes appeared almost an accident. As he has himself related, he was the guest during the summer of 1879, along with other young writers, of Zola at his country house at Médan. They passed the day in various amusements—Maupassant, of course, in a boat—and one moonlight night the conversation fell upon the art of the short story, which most of them held of no account. The sceptical Céard, gazing at the moon, said: "This is a fine romantic setting; we ought to make use of it," and Huysmans added ironically "by telling sentimental stories." But Zola thought it was a good idea, and it was agreed that the frame chosen by the first story-teller should be retained by his successors for their own inventions. Zola began, and told 'The Attack on the Mill.' When he had finished, everyone cried, "You ought to write that out at once," and Zola replied with a laugh, "I have done it already." It was Maupassant's turn the next evening, and he improvised the story which now heads the list of his works of fiction under the title 'Boule de Suif.' The others followed, and in the end it was decided to publish the stories together as a volume, which appeared the following year—'Soirées de Médan.' Of the group of authors, Maupassant was probably the least known to the public, but his story was at once recognised as the masterpiece of the collection. Flaubert, who was let into the secret by his pupil before publication, at once hailed it as a "chef d'œuvre." "Yes, young man, it is the work of a master, neither more nor less, originally conceived, successfully executed throughout, and written in excellent style. The setting and the characters are realised, and the psychology is masterly." And again: "Try to make a dozen like that and you will be somebody."

Maupassant responded promptly to this prescription, and by the end of 1881 he had a volume of short stories published which firmly established his reputation and at the same time indicated the power and limitations of his genius. The story which gave the volume its title, 'La Maison Tellier,' like 'Boule de Suif,' was carefully elaborated out of a scandalous anecdote told him by Rouen friends, one of whom was a well-known journalist. The scene of 'La Maison Tellier' was moved from Rouen to Fécamp, just as the denouement of 'Boule de Suif' was changed, at any rate if one is to believe the protestations of the central character of the incident in real life. The fact that the principal characters in both these stories belonged to the under-world is significant, if not of the writer's personal interests, at any rate of those of the realist and naturalist schools with which he was closely associated through his friends Flaubert and Zola. The seven other stories of the original collection were 'En Famille,' 'Histoire d'une Fille de Ferme,' 'Le Papa de Simon,' 'Une Partie de Campagne,' 'Sur l'Eau,' 'La Femme de Paul,' and 'Au Printemps.' 'En Famille' and 'Histoire d'une Fille de Ferme' had appeared in periodicals in the spring of the same year. The last four mentioned are all stories of boating on the Seine, and it is noteworthy that the author, still a young man in the enjoyment of robust physical health, presents the life of the river from its most repellent point of view. The lowest point of disgust is touched in 'La Femme de Paul,' as the extreme point of horror is reached in 'Sur l'Eau.' If we are given a picturesque setting, and the nightingales are allowed to sing in 'Une Partie de Campagne,' it is for the sake of contrast with a scene of brutal passion. 'In Springtime' sets forth, humorously, it is true, the basest side of love's young dream, especially when it is followed by the imprudence of marriage.

> "'And so you get married, and she calls you names from morning till night, understands nothing, knows nothing, chatters continually, sings the song of *Musette* at the top of her voice (oh! that song of *Musette*, how tired one gets of it!); quarrels with the grocer, tells the janitor all her domestic concerns, confides all the secrets of her bedroom to the neighbour's servant, discusses her husband with the tradespeople, and has her head so stuffed with stupid stories, with idiotic superstitions, with extraordinary ideas, and monstrous prejudices, that I—for what I have said, applies particularly to myself—shed tears of discouragement every time I talk to her.'"

By way of compensation, we have a simple and natural chapter of country life, told with infinite humour, in the 'Histoire d'une Fille de Ferme,' and in 'Le Papa de Simon' Maupassant shows feeling as well as humour, a profound sense of the decencies and delicacies of life as well as of its brutalities. The women in all the stories except one are either vicious or unfortunate, in the technical sense of that misused word, and those of 'En Famille,' while they are respectable, can hardly be said to raise the level of Maupassant's standard of feminine virtue.

Maupassant's second collection of short stories, 'Mlle. Fifi' (1882), presents us with another row of frail or abandoned women, the heroine of the first being indeed modelled on the original holder of the title rôle of 'Boule de Suif.' Lest our insistence on the recurrence of this particular subject should be thought an example of Anglo-Saxon prudery, it must be pointed out that the publication of this second volume was immediately followed by a protest from the veteran critic, Francisque Sarcey.

> "Why give one's self so much trouble to study beings so unworthy of interest? These depraved souls are only capable of a small number of sentiments closely connected with animality. The survey of them is quickly made, and the author is in vain armed with piercing powers of analysis—he cannot draw blood out of a stone."

Maupassant, in an attempt to defend himself, asserted the artist's right to choose his own subject as may please him best, and continued:

> "The modern writer aims at the accurate observation of the truth. Now, woman has two functions in life—love and maternity. The novelists, perhaps wrongly, have thought the first of these functions more interesting for their readers than the second, and they have first observed woman in the professional exercise of that for which she seemed to be born. . . .
>
> "Moreover, there exist among men profound differences of intelligence produced by education, environment, etc.; it is not the same with woman: her human rôle is more restricted, her faculties are more limited; from the top to the bottom of the ladder, she remains the same. . . .
>
> "There are no classes among women. They count for nothing in society except in relation to those who marry them or protect them. In taking them for companions, regular or irregular, are men always so scrupulous about their origin? Why should we be more so in taking them as literary subjects?"

It was not a strong defence, and Albert Wolff returned to the attack, accusing Maupassant of lack of frankness in his reply to Sarcey. Maupassant was frank enough in his rejoinder. He admitted that the field of the recent novel was too restricted, and excused it as a reaction from the conventional sentiment of centuries of idealistic art.

> "When the crisis is past (and it must be nearing its end) the novelists will look at all beings and all facts with clear eyes and unprejudiced minds, and their work, according to their ability, will embrace life in all its manifestations.
>
> "If we seem today to abuse the microscope and to study always the same human insect, so much the worse for us. It is because we are incapable of a vaster scope."

We shall look in vain in any of these early stories for what in one of them Maupassant describes as "the sentimental idealism of love of the heart, love of the soul"; it is always "love of the senses," and when, in the defence of himself quoted above, he uses the phrases "amour" and "femme d'amour," it is with that significance. On the other hand, it is merely just to remember that Maupassant never paints vice in the false colours of alluring sentimentality. More often than the excitement of sensual indulgence, it is its more repulsive physical features he describes, or the tedium of satiety. In 'Une Adventure Parisienne,' the romantic provincial lady who comes to the gay capital in search of new experiences finds her one experiment absolutely disillusionising, and returns to her country home thoroughly cured of her folly when the distinguished lover about whose imagined figure she has spun such airy fancies reveals himself to her in his sleep as he actually is:

> "Under the yellow rays of a Chinese lantern she gazed in dismay at this little man lying on his back, his round belly raising the sheet like an inflated balloon. He snored like an organ, with prolonged snorts and comical strangling noises. His few

remaining hairs took advantage of the occasion to stand up strangely, tired with their long fixation on the bare skull whose devastation they ordinarily veiled. And a thin stream of saliva flowed from one corner of his half-open mouth."

If there is in many of Maupassant's scenes of passion a certain brutality, it is the brutality of the conscientious artist who saw life after that fashion. The complaint that there is far too much of it is a criticism of the artist's sense of proportion, of his range of interests; and the justice of this criticism Maupassant himself admits. The predominance of the "esprit gaulois" in the *nouvelle* was a literary tradition of the type before Maupassant gave the short story new life, not only in France, but throughout the civilised world, by the technical skill and artistic power with which he endowed it. It can hardly be made a reproach to him that in enriching the genre with his wonderful genius, he did not at the same time greatly enlarge its scope. It is, however, the fact that in spite of the apparent wealth and variety of Maupassant's short stories, they fall readily into a few distinct classes of very limited range. He has a large number of stories of the hunting field and of peasant life, some of them in the Norman dialect of which he was absolute master. Similarly, his experience in a government office gave him the opportunity for piercing insight into the narrow, care-worn lives of the lower middle class. Very rarely he gives us an idyll of unsurpassable charm. He has more examples of what may be called the inverted idyll—a story which begins with the traditional romantic atmosphere and ends in the cruellest realism. Of love stories, ordinarily so called, where the lovers are allowed to "live happily ever after," there are practically none. One of the stories most familiar in translation, 'Happiness,' is significant as a solitary exception, and the case is indicated by the author as such.

One type of tale in which Maupassant excelled has an almost painful personal interest—his treatment of the horrible and uncanny. We get a hint of this in such early stories as 'Sur l'Eau' and 'La Femme de Paul,' but the more striking examples are later, such as 'Le Horla' (1887) and 'Qui sait' (1890), written when the author's mind was overstrained by excessive nervous tension, possibly stimulated by incipient mania or under the influence of drugs.

It may be well to correct at this point the impression that Maupassant's ultimate break-down had its origin in a life of dissipation; the known facts are a sufficient contradiction. His laborious apprenticeship was followed by a brief but brilliant period of achievement—as remarkable for its consistent high quality as for its exceptional quantity. During the ten years between 1880 and 1890 he published sixteen volumes of short stories, six novels, three volumes of travel, a three-act play and a large amount of miscellaneous journalism. He worked regularly and steadily, every morning, and his health was much more probably undermined by overwork than by amusements, for which indeed, except for his yearly visit to the Normandy coast for hunting, fishing and acquiring new material, he had little gift. As early as 1880 he complained to Flaubert of trouble with his eyes; in 1883 it became more serious; by 1885 he suffered occasional loss of vision accompanied by extreme nervousness, which was no doubt aggravated by the use of drugs. During the last two or three years of his literary career he became steadily worse until the crisis of his attempted suicide, the complete break-down of his reason, and his death in confinement.

When the conditions under which Maupassant worked are considered, and the character of his genius is appreciated, it seems less strange that an author who has contributed so largely to the amusement of the thoughtless reader—most of his collections of short stories were bought at railroad stations to pass a few idle hours—should take his permanent place in literature as a laboriously trained artist whose ingrained bitterness of spirit is reflected in the brutal pessimism which pervades almost all he has written. The gem-like perfection of his work seems to dazzle the unobservant reader, whose mind is apparently completely captivated by the unfailing skill with which the desired effect, whether of horror or of humour, is produced. Maupassant has had abundant imitators in many languages, but no one has surpassed him in his chosen field.

It seems unfair to make Maupassant's consummate skill in the short story a reason for depreciating his fame as a novelist, and it cannot be said that any one of his novels is merely a succession or combination of incidents connected by a set of characters. His first novel, 'Une Vie,' rests not merely upon a literary theory but upon a central idea clearly conceived and carefully elaborated—the presentation of the life of an ordinary woman in a particular neighbourhood—the Norman coast between Yport and Étretat, which the novelist knew best—at a particular period, that of the generation immediately preceding his own. There are few sensational elements in the story—the birth of Rosalie's child, Jeanne's first discovery of her husband's infidelity, the somewhat melodramatic episode of his death; otherwise the life of the heroine unfolds itself from youth to old age with the ordinary incidents of everyday life—her marriage, the death of her parents, the birth of her children, her descent from wealth and comfort to straitened circumstances, with the faithful Rosalie as her only friend. Rosalie, the easy victim of her master in her thoughtless youth, shows herself a tower of probity and common sense in her mistress's sad old age; indeed, she is the only character in the book who shows any real intelligence or strength of mind. The men exhibit rather more than full measure of the ordinary human failings—lasciviousness, avarice, bigotry, ill-temper, shocking incapacity to manage either the moral or the material affairs of life; and the women are not much better. Yet, such is the art of the novelist that the story of their doings and sufferings is one of absorbing interest, and makes an ineradicable impression on the mind. 'Une Vie' is one of the world's great novels, and has been so acknowledged by the masters of the craft.

'Bel-Ami' in its own way—a much more unpleasant way—is hardly less original. The reader of 'Une Vie' may indulge in sympathy for the weak and innocent Jeanne; the villain-hero of 'Bel-Ami' can only be regarded, as his creator regards him, ironically, as he wades persistently, imperturbably through his too numerous sensual adventures to social success. The mud is too crass, and there is too much of it, for any but the strongest nerves, but the power of the drawing is undeniable.

'Mont-Oriol,' with its humorous account of the establishment of a fashionable watering place, is easier to read, but it is in every way a slighter piece of work. Maupassant deliberately tried his hand at a more elevated love affair, but neither the man nor the woman is of sufficient stability or depth of character for one to take any profound interest in their fortunes or misfortunes. The other characters, though very distinctly drawn, are intellectually and morally valueless.

In 'Pierre et Jean' we live in a more wholesome air. The inevitable sexual irregularity is moved back into the past, and we see only its consequences in the strained relations between the legitimate and the illegitimate son, both of whom are intelligent and capable, worthy of respect and of association with decent people, quite different from the villainous set the novelist has hitherto introduced to us. So little happens that the novel can hardly be said to have a plot, but it is admirably written and gives an unforgettable picture of the life of a well-to-do family in the great Norman seaport of Havre.

'Fort comme la Mort' strikes a much deeper note—the note of absolute tragedy which the novelist had not yet attempted. It is a love affair—irregular, of course, but dignified by the constancy and character of the participants until the man's passion for the daughter of his mistress seems rather a calamity than a crime. His mental torture is cut short by a street accident, and his creator has nothing but pity for him at the end of the book as he lies in his last sleep.

> "His face was relaxed, impassive, inanimate, indifferent to all suffering, set at rest in a moment by the Eternal Forgetfulness."

'Notre Cœur,' Maupassant's last novel, is, like 'Fort comme la Mort,' a psychological study of a "grande passion," the victim being again a man of intelligence and refinement, in this case a gifted amateur in art, music, and literature. He has friends interested in all three, and one of them, Gaston de Lamarthe, bears considerable resemblance to Maupassant himself. The description of his talents is fairly characteristic of Maupassant's genius:

> "Armed with an eye which gathered portraits, attitudes and gestures with the rapidity and precision of a photographic camera, and endowed with a novelist's sense and insight as natural as a hunting dog's scent, he stored up professional information from morn to eve. With these two very simple senses, a clear vision of forms and an instinctive intuition of what lay beneath them, he gave to his books, which revealed none of the ordinary intuitions of psychological writers but seemed bits of human life extracted from reality, the colour, tone, aspect, and movement of life itself."

Maupassant puts into the mouth of Lamarthe his own opinion, quoted above, that women were created for only two purposes, "love and childbearing," adding that modern women are monsters, because they are incapable of love and won't have children. The hero, not unreasonably, asks why Lamarthe spends half his time running after them, and Lamarthe replies:

> "Why? Because it interests me. Are you going to forbid doctors to walk the hospitals? These women are my clinic.
>
> "Then I adore them because they are so completely of our own day. I am not much more of a man than they are women. When I am almost attached to one of them, I amuse myself by examining and analysing all that detaches me from them with the curiosity of the chemist who takes drugs to ascertain the effects of poisons.
>
> "In this way I shall never be really captured by them. I play their game as well as they do, perhaps better, and that helps me with my books, while what they do does not help them with anything."

This recalls the saying of Ibsen about Emilie Bardach, "She thought she would get me; but I got her—for my play." It is still more interesting to compare it with Maupassant's personal confidences to Mme. Lecomte du Nouy, as recorded by her in 'En regardant passer la Vie':

> "Those women, whose slave he seemed, did not stand so high in his esteem as they thought. He was not their dupe; their past hovered over their present and cast a dazzling light upon it. He described them to me body and soul, made me know and judge them. And when I asked him: 'How can you love them after analysing their mean sentiments, their pose of philosophic erudition, their baseness of soul, the pettiness of their conduct?', he answered, 'I do not love them, but they amuse me. I find it very funny to make them believe that I am the victim of their charm.'"

The heroes of Maupassant's later novels do not find it at all amusing. They are victims. The dying artist in 'Fort comme la Mort' says: "He who invented life and made men was very blind or very wicked!" Mariolle's farewell letter to his mistress reads:

> "You are so made that you cannot feel as I feel, that you cannot even guess what is passing in my mind when I come to see you, when you talk to me, and when I look at you. Yes, you consent, you accept me, and you even offer me a peaceful and reasonable happiness for which I ought to thank you on my knees for the rest of my life. But I don't want it. What a love, made up of horror and torture, which asks without ceasing the alms of a passionate word or a tender caress, and which never receives it! My heart is as hungry as a beggar who runs a long time after you with hand out-stretched. You give him kind words but no bread. It is bread, it is love that I need. I am going away miserable and poor, lacking your affection, a few crumbs of which would have saved me. I have nothing in the world but a cruel thought in my heart which I must kill. That is what I shall try to do."

He seeks and finds consolation in the love of a serving maid in a country inn—the physical passion which Maupassant celebrated at the beginning of his literary career. Such a simple solution as marriage and honest work does not occur to Mariolle, though he and the lady are both free. It does momentarily occur to the artist in 'Fort comme la Mort,' but in his case it is impossible, the lady's husband being still alive and a friend of his. Marriage is in Maupassant at the best a dull business, and according to his view it is idle to seek anything in free love but momentary sensual satisfaction. Upon all humanity rests the curse of eternal isolation. So the deserted mistress in 'Mont-Oriol,' when she came to suffer less and think more, divined "the fruitless striving, unceasing from the beginning of the world, the tireless striving of men to tear the sheath in which their soul struggles, for ever solitary, striving of the arms, the lips, the eyes, the bare shuddering flesh, of love exhausting itself in kisses, to succeed only in giving life to another desolate being."

It is an embittered, depressed, often a degraded view of life Maupassant presents to us with incomparable art. How far his pessimism was due to the intellectual conditions of his time, to his own personal surroundings, or to some inherent defect in his own nature, it is difficult to say; the fact is undeniable. "Life is an ugly business" ("La vie est une vilaine chose"), he says in 'Pierre et Jean,' the most cheerful of his novels. As such he assuredly represented it, with the implacable conscientiousness of a great artist. Nothing could be further from the truth than the popular view which regards him as the light and easy raconteur of Parisian naughtiness. It is always a sad, sometimes a mean, often a debased world in which his spirit moves, never really a gay one. His humour has always something sardonic about it, revealing in ludicrous guise the baseness, cruelty, or brutality of human nature, at the best its folly or inconsequence. It is the laughter of a melancholy devil, without faith and without hope.

But when the worst has been said of Maupassant's view of life, his art remains, within its limited range, irreproachable and unsurpassed. His people, unlovely and unlovable as most of them are, are living; and he has given us matchless descriptions of natural scenery, especially of his own beloved Normandy. He had a real and growing sympathy for the humble, the weak and the erring; he saw and did not shrink from describing the limitations of their lives, their narrowness, and occasional meanness of soul; but he appreciated the sturdy qualities of his farmer and fisher folk, their native shrewdness and stedfastness to their ideals of patriotic or family devotion. He kept a resolute eye on the truth as he saw it, and painted what he saw with a master's hand. It would be worse than idle to reproach him for not seeing more or seeing it differently. We should rather admire the patient courage with which he perfected his powers as an imaginative writer, and accomplished, in spite of failing health and disordered nerves, a mass of artistic work, which, in spite of its limitations, will always be a source of pleasure to the ordinary reader and of appreciative amazement to those who study the secrets of his craftsmanship.

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1890 'L'inutile Beauté.'

NOVELS

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CHAPTER IV

ALPHONSE DAUDET (1840–1897)

Alphonse Daudet was a favourite of the gods. His life was as beautiful as his work; in him the man was not only equal, but superior to the artist,—and he was a great artist. He was born at Nimes, "august city," says Anatole France, "beautiful with antique columns, gardens and light." His family was of good bourgeois ancestry and had been moderately well off. 'Le Petit Chose' and the autobiography published by his brother Ernest give us a wealth of information on this point. Vincent Daudet, the father of Ernest and Alphonse, sold silks, principally handkerchiefs, ribbons and scarves; the mother was not of a practical turn of mind and spent a good deal of her time dreaming over books.

His childhood was not happy, or at least did not appear so to him in after years. "Fears and tears made up my childhood. I have no recollection of home which is not sorrowful." But his brother Ernest tells us that in spite of a pinched life due to the business misfortunes of the father, their early childhood was surrounded with modest comfort and warmed with tender affection; Alphonse evidently forgot his happy wanderings in the mulberry and olive plantations on the lavender-covered hills, and his joy at playing the bishop or the fiery sea-captain in the childish comedies contrived with his cousins and neighbours in the warehouses of the "Maison Sabran," their home in Nimes. In the financial crisis caused by the Revolution of 1848, Vincent Daudet's fortune, already none too secure, was overwhelmed, and he had to accept a subordinate position in a commercial house at Lyons; shortly afterwards he resumed business on his own account, but without much success. The demands of heartless creditors brought the unfortunate merchant to the verge of bankruptcy. Alphonse witnessed the most humiliating scenes, visits of the bailiff, mortifying discussions with the landlord, the pawning of jewels and silverware at the "Mont-de-Piété."

"Oh, days of black misery," writes Ernest Daudet, "what deep furrows you dug in our memory, what precocious maturity you imparted to our minds. Indeed we became men early, struggling against adversity." But Alphonse was carefree, although the poverty of his parents was the cause of many heartaches. He went to school dressed in pitiful or grotesque clothes which humiliated him and aroused the raillery of his schoolmates, but he won their respect by the keenness of his intelligence and his biting repartee. When he felt like working, he outstripped them all and reached the first rank without apparent effort. But he worked only by fits; he was subject to periods of laziness and loved to play truant. He was fond of violent sports and of long walks in the country; he could not resist the fascination of a ray of sun shining on the roof. So he tells us in the first chapter of 'Le Petit Chose.' "He skipped the class and squandered his days on the river crowded with steamers, barges and tugs; he escaped by miracle a thousand dangers, the paddle wheels and the swift current which threw him against the piles of a bridge or under a tow rope. He was fished out half drowned, with a cut in his head, by the mariners who, exasperated by the awkwardness of this brat, too weak to handle the oars, spanked him soundly after having saved his life."

Things went from bad to worse, and the family had to seek lodgings in one of the most miserable streets of the town. Ernest left school and worked with his father, who was too poor to pay for a clerk; Alphonse at fifteen still kept the vision of the brilliant horizon of Provence —the memory of his trips in the mountains with the shepherds, the nostalgia of the immense plain, of the sunburnt rocks, of the olive-gathering. The freshness of these childish sensations, as well as contact with the street crowds, aroused in him a thrilling sensibility. It was then that he began to write the verse which later on formed his first book, 'Les Amoureuses,' charming and artless lines, full of tenderness, which soothed the sorrows of his mother.

An old bookseller allowed him to rummage in his shop. He devoured all the books which fell into his hands, the classics and the moderns, Shakespeare and Boccaccio, Buffon, Chateaubriand and Eugène Sue, Dumas and Henri Mürger. He greedily absorbed good and bad literature. He finished his studies as best he could, but the lack of money prevented him from carrying them to the end. Finally he accepted a position of assistant in the small college of Alais and left his old home with a heavy heart. Undersized, nearsighted, oversensitive and at the same time intelligent, handsome and youthful, he was totally unfit for such a dreary task. In spite of all these drawbacks, he succeeded, through his marvellous gift of story-telling, in keeping peace and quiet among some fifty children of the younger division. He passed his evenings alone in a chill garret reading Tacitus and Montaigne and wooing the Muse. Promoted to charge of the middle division, his position became untenable; his charm did not work on the older boys. They hated him for his natural elegance, which contrasted with their loutishness, and took advantage of his nearsightedness to play on him hundreds of diabolical jokes, one of which came near causing his death. He fell into such depths of despair that he thought of suicide.

Meanwhile, the poor home at Lyons had been broken up; Ernest had gone to Paris, and on the recommendation of Armand de Pontmartin, the famous critic of 'La Gazette de France,' had been immediately engaged on the monarchist paper 'Le Spectateur.' At this windfall, the first idea of that excellent brother was "Now I can get Alphonse to Paris." So he wrote to the poor schoolteacher, "Come," and "the bird flew for refuge to his side." Ernest offered him half of the garret where he lived on the fifth floor of the Hôtel du Sénat, a sordid lodging house of the Latin Quarter. "I see him still, worn with fatigue, hungry and cold, wrapped in an old overcoat, threadbare, shabby, out of fashion, but wearing rubbers over blue cotton socks in order to give his attire an appearance of originality." The first night was dismal, but next day the two brothers go to the Luxembourg Garden for a walk, the sun, a great remedy for a southerner, encourages the young exile, fills him with confidence and hope, and he starts briskly to the conquest of the great city. Soon, one after the other, obstacles are overcome. The literary coteries receive the newcomer with open arms, for charm radiates from him; his artless imagination, his provincial appearance, his peculiar accent, even his nearsightedness and his timidity, amuse; as yet he does not arouse the jealousy of his co-workers; moreover, he is handsome, of a paradoxical and exaggerated beauty. Théodore de Banville traced in 'Les Camées' this portrait of him:

> "A marvellously charming head; an amber coloured complexion of a warm pallor; the eyebrows straight and silky; the eye sunken and flaming, humid and burning, lost in dreams, unseeing but charming to look at; the mouth of a deep red, voluptuous and thoughtful; a soft and childish beard; a wealth of dark hair; a small and delicately chiselled ear; all these concur to make a whole of proud manhood combined with feminine grace."

He had not yet succeeded in conquering his natural laziness. Like a cicada he sang when he felt like it. He was totally different from those young sharks of the literary world, from those "struggle-for-lifers" of whom he was later on to sketch the silhouette in such sharp lines. He sought glory indolently, he waited for inspiration; he composed poems in which the emotion of Musset was seasoned with irony. He interpreted the legends which he had brought from Provence, and of which the Parisians were ignorant. His first volume, 'Les Amoureuses,' created some comment; people enjoyed in it the high humour of a son of the South, tempered by a tender and fresh imagination, a pleasant mixture of cheerfulness and indolence, delicate and sincere emotion, brilliant colour and pleasant rhythm; in short, that charm that one feels without being able to define it. At every social gathering, at every concert, people recited his lines. Daudet was on the road to success; society lionised him, and often from interested motives rather than for pleasure he went to fashionable mansions, where he was taken at first for a Wallachian prince.

At one of the imperial receptions at the Tuileries, 'Les Prunes,' one of his best pieces, was read. The Empress was so taken by its poetic sweetness that she commanded the all-powerful Duc de Morny to enquire about the author. A few days later, Alphonse Daudet was summoned to the Presidency of the Legislature and told that if he agreed, he was to be henceforth an "attaché au cabinet," a pleasant sinecure with a reasonable salary and plenty of spare time. In dismissing the startled young man, the Duke made only one request: "Don't you think it would be better to have your hair cut?" But even that was not to be granted. To his death Daudet kept the luxuriant chevelure of a page of the Italian Renaissance.

Up to the death of the Duc de Morny, Alphonse Daudet led an extraordinary administrative career. Always the last to reach the office, he was also the first to leave it; he moreover enjoyed the privilege of long and frequent vacations. He was more or less in the position of a writer pensioned by the sovereign, as was so frequently the case under the old monarchy. He wrote for newspapers, principally 'Le Figaro,' mixed with artists and men of the world, and made excursions into Bohemia, where he was welcomed, thanks to his wit, his happy disposition and his good looks. He also collaborated with his patron in the composition of short plays and operettas, of an inconsequential but amusing trend. But he never ceased to work, and the combination of hard work and much play told on his constitution, which had never been strong.

What saved him in this rather wild existence was his habit of periodical retreat. He would go back to his native Provence and shut himself up for months in his famous old mill. We know how he discovered it. "On the Arles road near the quarries of Fonvielle, past the mountain of Corde and Montmajour Abbey, near a big village dusty and white like a quarry of chalkstone, there is a little hill covered with pines of an intense green which is refreshing in the middle of that sunburnt country; at the top the wings of a mill turn wildly; at the bottom, leaning against the shoulder of the hill, is a large white house, a rambling old dwelling, which begins like a castle with a large front and a pilastered Italian terrace, and ends in a small farmer's cottage." This mill never became his property. He wished to buy it, and a deed of sale was drawn in the office of the notary public of Fonvielle who probably has kept the original; the deed was never signed, but no one thought of contesting his possession of the crumbling and ruinous building. "It was," said he, "a heap of broken stones, rusted iron and planks; my mill lay, its limbs broken, as useless as a poet, while around the hillock millers prospered and worked full blast." Amid these ruins, thousands of perfumes, thousands of light murmurs reached him; he listened to the inner voices of memory and dream. Nothing is better for the artist than these periods of solitude and quiet thought; he recruits his shattered strength and gets hold of himself. When Daudet took his bride to the old mill, he told her: "It is here that I became a poet," and it was true. Here

Daudet conceived 'La Chêvre de M. Séguin,' 'Le Curé de Cucugnan,' 'L'Élixir du Révérend Père Gaucher,' 'Le Sous-Prêfet aux Champs,' 'L'Arlésienne,' 'Numa Roumestan,' 'Le Nabab,' and perhaps, above all, 'Tartarin.' In the same manner can be traced to his trips to Corsica and Algeria those little masterpieces: 'Le Phare des Sanguinaires,' 'Marie-Anto,' 'Kadour et Katel,' 'Le Premier Crayon de Tartarin,' and the famous lion hunt which rounds up 'Tartarin de Tarascon.'

In 1867, "a final and supreme piece of good fortune," says Zola, "awaited him, on his return from another trip to Algeria: he married Mademoiselle Julia Allard." The Goncourt diary describes the Allards as "bourgeois éperdus de littérature." Indeed, not content with admiring the poets, they occasionally rhymed quite successfully, and in 1874 they published a selection of their poems under the title of 'En Marge de la Vie.' Ernest Daudet was the first to make the acquaintance of the family; through him Alphonse met their daughter, and, charmed by her beauty and graceful ways, fell in love with her. Their idyllic courtship had for its setting the picturesque country around Ville d'Avray and Meudon and the magnificent park of St. Cloud, always haunted by the ghosts of two women famous for their charm and their misfortune, Queen Marie Antoinette and Empress Eugénie. The young couple were not rich, and Madame Daudet did not hesitate to shoulder a part of the financial burden of the household; while her husband wrote as a pot boiler the theatrical page in the 'Journal Officiel,' the young bride improvised criticisms under the pen name of Carl Stern. Her work was really good, and as she wrote often about men she knew intimately and admired, such as Edmond de Goncourt and Gustave Flaubert, it had a touch of intimacy which made it interesting. She had a determining influence on her husband's art. "Without my wife I should have abandoned myself to my natural facility; it is she who made me care for perfection." "There is not one single page," he says, "which she has not revised, retouched, where she has not thrown a little of her beautiful powder of azure and gold. . . . She is such an artist, and she has had such a part in all that I have written."

Before his marriage, Daudet had published nothing but charming and fanciful short stories. All his great books were published after. His wife stabilised his talent, acted as a counter weight against his restlessness, ensured for him the tranquility of mind demanded for long compositions. She made him work, and created around him an atmosphere favourable to the development of his imagination. When Alphonse Daudet's activity was reduced by sickness, when he became unable to visit his friends, as he loved to do, in order to discuss with them the problems of art and life seething in his mind, his wife organized for them, mostly for him, those famous Thursday dinners, at which the cream of the French literary world gathered round the invalid, and over which she presided with admirable tact, always keeping herself in the background. We find a proof of her voluntary effacement in the anecdote of the dedication of 'Le Nabab': "To the devoted, discreet and indefatigable, to my beloved Julia Daudet, with heartfelt thanks of grateful tenderness." When Madame Daudet saw the proofs, she vetoed this dedication, so anxious was she not to appear to have any part in her husband's work, although he was particularly proud of this collaboration. But once a widow, she dedicated her charming book 'Journées de Femme' to her beloved husband, "Still written in the happiness of his presence." The first result of this steadying influence on Daudet was the production in 1868 of that delicate and touching autobiography 'Le Petit Chose,' and in 1869 the publication of 'Les Lettres de Mon Moulin,' which their careless author had left scattered in newspapers and periodicals.

In August, 1870, out of a clear sky broke the storm of war. Daudet, incorporated in the 97th "Régiment de Marche," was soon sent to the "Garde Nationale" on account of his extreme short-sightedness. Although full of fighting enthusiasm, he saw little of the many battles which took place round Paris during the siege. Very much against his will, his chiefs kept him out of it as far as possible, considering it hardly short of murder to send to the front a man who was nearly blind when deprived of his thick goggles; during the Commune, Daudet was away from Paris. But for a year, the most intense of his existence, he had ceaselessly observed, and had gathered immense material. Besides, the war had left its stamp upon him; the youth had become a man. Henceforth, the artist develops with an astonishing rapidity. Two beings constitute Daudet, says in substance Adolphe Brisson, one sensitive, the other an observer; the sensitive part of his nature had up to that time been predominant; without disappearing entirely, it yields henceforth to the observer. During the war, Daudet came into close contact with the miseries of humanity. The terrible spectacles he had witnessed saddened him and ripened his nature. The scenes of the invasion, of the Siege of Paris, of the Commune, he engraved in indelible and striking characters in 'Les Contes du Lundi,' 'Les Lettres à un Absent' and 'Robert Helmont.'

Henceforth his life flowed regularly, divided between Paris and his country house of Champrosay. The only events were the publication of his books, the birth of his children and an occasional trip to foreign parts; his recreations were his intercourse with his friends and the education of his sons, to whom he was a comrade more than a mentor. The eldest, Léon, followed in his father's footsteps and turned to letters after having studied medicine; he is now one of the most interesting characters of contemporary France, at the same time novelist, journalist, orator and politician; Lucien is a painter and a writer of more than average ability; Edmée, their sister, a lovable child, was the darling of her father.

From 1872, with 'L'Arlésienne' and 'Tartarin de Tarascon,' begins a period of intense production which practically ends in 1888 with 'L'Immortel.' During these sixteen years Daudet wrote fifteen books ('Port-Tarascon,' published in 1890, was practically finished before 1888), all excellent, six of them masterpieces that generation after generation will enjoy. Such a tremendous achievement could not but tell heavily on a constitution none too strong, in which, as the French say, "the blade wore out the sheath." When he was caught by the fever of inspiration, everything else disappeared; night and day he worked shut in his room, forgetting his meals, lying down on his bed for a few hours when total exhaustion dried up the torrent of his thoughts, waking up with a start to scribble an expression, to fix a detail which was hovering in his subconscious mind, and even in his sleep hearing always an immense rumour as if the swell of the sea or the rumbling of a crowd were beating on his ears. For a while he no longer belonged to the world; he lived with the personages of his invention. As he was writing 'Les Rois en Exil,' his strength gave way and for days his life was in grave danger. One night, he felt upon him the hand of death, but even then his whole soul was in his work, and calling his faithful companion, he whispered in her ear: "Finish my book." It was the anguished cry of the creator who cannot bear the thought that his task will remain incomplete. Fortunately, his nervous force permitted him to weather the storm. But shortly after, he began to feel the attacks of the disease which slowly undermined his vitality. For more than fifteen years it was a pitiful struggle between mental and moral energy and growing physical weakness.

His intelligence to the very last remained unimpaired, and his soul, chastened by the pains of the flesh, rose to greater heights of wisdom, charity and self-sacrifice. It was then that his influence upon the young writers of his generation was the greatest. His door was open to all, and he was always ready to help those in need, whether deserving or not, either out of his purse, the kindness of his heart, or his wealth of experience. His production was considerably limited, but 'La petite Paroisse' and 'Soutien de Famille' show the same keenness of mind, the same charm of expression as his former work. It is then that he conceived the idea of the 'Revue de Champrosay' in which he would have set forth his theories of life and discussed events with the impartiality of a thinker who considers himself apart from his time. It is said that a wealthy Mæcenas had offered to furnish the capital necessary for this disinterested undertaking. Unfortunately, it remained in the world of dreams and his intimates alone received the revelations of that admirable soul. They are not entirely lost to us, for his son Léon, in his book, 'Alphonse Daudet,' gives us an insight into his father's mind which helps greatly toward the comprehension of his work. There is revealed the graceful dream of 'le marchand de bonheur,' which in itself is a complete philosophy of life.

Alphonse Daudet died in 1897. Illness had respected his intelligence, and "on his deathbed," said Anatole France, in an article written immediately after the event, "the body, so long tortured, had regained its bucolic beauty, its face of a divine shepherd. To his friends he appeared charming and young, and they will always see him so."

Daudet was a poet, a novelist, and a story-teller. His attempts at drama (except 'L'Arlésienne') are negligible, and the plays taken from his novels were composed by specialists for the stage. A poet he always was, perhaps more when he wrote in prose than when he expressed himself in verse.

His novels depict with remarkable truthfulness the manners and customs of his time. 'Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné' describes the commercial bourgeoisie; 'Le Nabab,' French society under the Second Empire; 'Les Rois en Exil,' the pitiful story of deposed monarchs—who were not at that time so frequent as they are now; 'Numa Roumestan,' the psychology of the self-seeking politician, also a relatively new type; 'L'Évangéliste,' religious reactions; 'L'Immortel,' the literary world which gravitates round the French Academy; 'Soutien de Famille,' the agitations of a certain period of the Third French Republic; 'La Petite Paroisse,' the modern type of the unscrupulous "arriviste."

Even in the most important of these, under the novelist we find the story-teller; in many, there is a certain lack of unity; they appear as a succession of short stories woven round the same plot rather than a closely-knit single romance. But in all his best work, the genuine realism of his art strikes us. "He translates what he has seen," said Jules Lemaître, "and transforms it, but solely what he has seen. His books, built up on noted impressions, are disjointed, but keep the intense life of impressions noted on the spot." This is what made people say that Daudet was more of a realist than Zola; and this is strictly true if we take the word "realistic" in its proper meaning, for Daudet never distorted life as Zola did. The proof of it is that the human types he has created remain in our memories with a clear outline, a personal identity and a name; we know them as we know our acquaintances of flesh and blood and according to our temperament and their own, we like or we dislike them. "The real joy of the novelist will always be to create human types," said Daudet, "who are loved or hated separately from their creator and without any mention of his name. . . . When, about one of the puppets of the political, artistic, or social comedy, I hear: 'He is a Tartarin, a Delobelle, a Roumestan,' a thrill seizes me, the thrill of pride of a father, who is hidden in a crowd which applauds his son, and who wants to cry out: 'It is my boy.'"

Is it true that Daudet's personages are caricatures? There is little doubt that in some the deliberate exaggeration of certain traits contributes to make of them humorous impersonations rather than sober portraits, but this is a racial characteristic. "There is in Mistral's language (Provençal) a word that sums up one of the instincts of the race: *Galéja,* to joke, to banter, and one can see the light of irony, the mischievous expression which lurks in the Provençal eyes. . . . And I also, I am a *galéjairé"* said Daudet. This jesting gaiety is balanced by a deep sense of pity. Daudet knew suffering under its many forms, and it made him compassionate to his fellowmen. "A distressed face at the corner of a street distracts my soul, and I never forget it. There are some intonations that I avoid remembering lest I should stupidly burst into tears." The union of these two qualities gives to Daudet's work its particular appeal, and makes it resemble in a way Dickens; this similarity, which has often been emphasized in comparing 'Jack' or 'Le Petit Chose' and 'David Copperfield,' ought not to be exaggerated, for the two men are otherwise as profoundly different as are the two races to which they belong.

'Tartarin' or rather the 'Tartarins' are exquisite satires which are frequently misunderstood, people refusing to see under the exaggerated traits the deep study of a type which, with all its weaknesses, is worthy of admiration. The last pages of 'Port-Tarascon,' the plea of Tartarin in favour of the gay, imaginative "liar of the South," who prevaricates for the mere pleasure of excelling his fellows, and the "liar of the North," shrewd and greedy, who lies for gain with a smug face, gives the key to what Daudet meant. This opposition of the North and the South we find also under a more serious form in Numa Roumestan, who represents the South, his wife the North. Daudet dreamed of tackling the same problem from still another angle in a story of Napoleon I which he planned to call 'Napoléon, Homme du Midi,' but this design was never accomplished.

'Sapho,' which is probably the most carefully composed of his works, is in a class by itself; more than all others it is a psychological novel in which the milieu plays the least part. This story of a youth caught in the toils of an aging courtesan, who, in retributive justice, falls honestly in love with him, is a universal tragedy which belongs to any climate or any century. It has been called immoral, but it is so bare of suggestive descriptions, the lesson is so terrible, that the general effect strikes one as being austere. When Daudet wrote on the dedication page: "For my sons, when they are twenty," he knew what serious subject of meditation he was offering them.

Daudet was, as has been already suggested, essentially a realist, but he was far too much of an artist to believe in the photographic reproduction of life. His theory of "les dominantes" involves the selection, by artistic sensibility, of the salient or essential points of things which are alone to be presented to the reader in a novel or short story. But the materials for this selection are to be obtained by observation. Probably no contemporary writer deserves the epithet of naturalist more completely than Daudet. First, he never dares to invent or even to conjecture without the most solid foundation of fact. There is not a setting he has not seen with his own eyes; so much so that in his first attempts the same settings appear again and again and he varies them only as his memory is enriched by new views. In his dialogue, you have always the clear impression that the sentences have been said by somebody, the gestures and the attitudes have been caught as accurately as by the pencil of an artist, but nature is transformed by his exceptional sensibility and his faculty of discrimination makes him select the essential and discard the superfluous. His imagination discerns the most distant as well as the closest connections between things; hence his wit is never in the words, but in the thought.

The combination of these various gifts is already found in the famous notebooks, in which Daudet wrote down day by day everything that aroused his curiosity; it is very slowly, step by step, that Daudet proceeds from his starting point to his goal, that is to say, from the notebook to the printed book, from scattered and fragmentary observation to the cleverly organized work of art. In his 'Contes du Lundi,' in 'Robert Helmont,' those admirable and moving memories of the Franco-German War, as well as in the poetic fancies of the 'Lettres de Mon Moulin,' we find nothing but this fragmentary observation. 'Le Petit Chose' may be placed in the same class, for although it is an accomplished novel, the only fact that links the different episodes is that the principal character is the author himself. Later on he broadened his horizon and attempted more complete stories, but he did not abandon his peculiar process of fragmentary observation, and this probably contributed to the naturalness of his books, for in nature, although events have nearly always the relation of causes to effects, they are, nevertheless, discontinuous in their succession.

In his observation of nature, Daudet was gifted with a preternatural precision. He was extremely near-sighted, so that the external world appeared to him in large masses without clear outline. But he saw the smallest details with an abnormal sharpness. When, in the course of his development, he came to devote more attention to the study of souls than to the observation of flowers or insects, he observed them in the same manner, from the same close range. There is no metaphysics in his work, no psychological analysis; there is no clever technique or sharp reasoning; Daudet simply saw. His intuition was as immediate as it was accurate. He did not place himself outside of the soul he wanted to study, but right in the centre of it. According to the organic bent of his sensibility, he felt no abstract love for the human or the material order—only a personal affection for the individual and the specific; he was friendly to the poor, the ne'er-do-wells, but he did not love them as a species. He hated vague humanitarianism, and abstained deliberately from oratorical outbursts of generalisation. His feelings were aroused only by concrete cases.

It has been said that Daudet was not a thinker. It may be admitted that in him the dividing line between feeling and thought always remained somewhat vague, or, rather, that his intelligence never forgot the sensibility that prompted it, but always reverted to that source; on the highest summit of ideas, he never lost sight of the real.

This combination of intelligence and sensibility was not a spontaneous growth; it had ancestors and pedigree. Daudet was not a waif; he was the off-shoot of a very definite race and one of the best products of that race. He was a Latin, to quote Abel Hermant, slightly touched with Hellenism, born in the very heart of the Roman colony, among those pure-bred Latins who for the second time have conquered the Gaul. This heredity was confirmed by a classical education. Daudet belonged to that élite who consider the authors of antiquity as fellow-countrymen. All his life he enjoyed Tacitus and Petronius, and among the French preferred Montaigne, who kept such close bonds with latinity, and in whom he loved also the charming combination of beautiful formal French with the quaint speech of a province. He had in common with his great French predecessor the reasonable and moderate philosophy, the exact notion of values, the artless and frankly outspoken humanity which have endeared both of them to France and to the world.

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PLAYS

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CHAPTER V

PIERRE LOTI (1850–1923)

Rochefort, the birthplace of Pierre Loti, is in the Lowlands of Saintonge, one of the dreariest places in France; it is on the river Charente, fifteen miles from the sea, an artificial military port created by Colbert, minister of Louis XIV. Nowadays devoid of life and gaiety, the city does not lack picturesqueness; centuries of history weigh upon it. Its ancient dwellings seem haunted by the ghosts and memories of the past. In the docks of the inner harbour lie obsolete specimens of French men-of-war looking like bizarre monsters, stranded by some evil fate far from their natural element. The defensive ramparts are now broad walks shaded with century-old elms. The Navy Hospital built by Mansart, the old mansions representing all styles of architecture, the immense arsenals, the many small shops which sell strange nicknacks brought from abroad by sea-faring men, all contribute to give to the ancient Huguenot city a peculiar—even a mysterious air. The Jack tars with their bright blue collars, the colonial troops in their picturesque uniforms make one think of voyages far away. In the Museum, collections of tropical plants, of multicoloured shellfish, of arms and ornaments of savage tribes, recall wild and barbarous countries to the imaginative visitor. There one dreams at the same time of centuries long past and of the ever-changing horizons of the high seas; in the midst of the calm, the stillness of an ancient city which modern commerce has abandoned and forgotten, one hears the note of wild adventure under tropical skies, among primitive peoples whose main activities are still love and war.

In this setting, Lucien Viau, who afterward took the pen name of Pierre Loti, was born in January, 1850; there he spent his childhood, and, as his biographer, Jean Mariel, remarks, "on a child as sensitive as he was, such an atmosphere could not but have a determining influence." He belonged to an old Protestant family, some of whose members emigrated to Holland at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, while others (Loti's forbears) went to the wind-swept Isle of Oléron, just off the coast, from which their descendants returned later to the continent. Lucien, the youngest of three children, was brought up by women. Of his father he seems to have very little to say. His brother, much older than he, already a Navy Surgeon when Lucien was still a child, always away from home save for some short and infrequent furloughs, may have had on him an intermittent influence as a teller of wonderful stories. His mother, his aunts, and principally his sister, play the prominent rôles in the memories of his childhood.

Lucien grew up in the tranquil and austere atmosphere of this old bourgeois family of strict Huguenot stock where, morning and evening, masters and servants worshipped in common. His only diversions were walks round the town and every Thursday a trip to a small country house owned by his parents and called "La Limoise." The oversensitive child, moved by the biblical anecdotes told at bedtime by his mother, thought of taking holy orders. But the time had come for him to start his studies in earnest; his parents, fearing the roughness of college life, gave him a tutor, but he hated the tasks imposed upon him, loathed his books and his work; on the other hand, he loved music, his collection of brilliant butterflies and shells. An old uncle, a former Navy surgeon, who owned a small museum of natural history, told him legends of darkest Africa and gave him an alluring vision of the career of a great naturalist. The mysterious appeal of strange lands grew in him stronger and stronger until he no longer desired the quiet life of a clergyman, but wished to devote himself to the task of a missionary among the heathen. He entered college, but could not accommodate himself to its strict regularity and rough comradeship; when he became a butt for the illwill of his masters and the cruel teasing of his schoolfellows, who nicknamed him "the little sweet one," he retired within himself and wrote a diary where he set down everyday events, but mostly his own feelings. One day he discovered in the garret of the country house a big roll of old paper; it was a log-book; it evoked for him the sunny landscape of the tropics, all the magic of the sea, the intoxication of adventures in undreamed-of countries. Just at this time his big brother returned from Tahiti, "l'Isle délicieuse," crowding the house with native canoes, strings of beads, headdresses of plumes, queer-shaped arms and implements, giving thus a real background to the vague reveries of the child. As his brother was leaving again for a voyage from which he was not to return, his mother, overwhelmed with grief, enfolded her younger son in her arms, saying: "You at least will stay with me." Loti confesses that at this moment he felt that the only career to satisfy his restless soul would be that of the sea.

In Paris, where he went in order to prepare for the examination of the Navy School, he remained indifferent to the allurements of bohemian life, kept the brusque and shy ways of a bird who has been caught too big and put into a cage. Two years later he was sent to a French training ship, the "Borda," at Brest. This success was soon darkened by sorrows and material difficulties. The Viaus had never been rich, and when the father died, a few days after the arrival of the young man at the Navy School, the family found itself in a precarious situation. In consequence of these troubles, young Viau devoted all the time he could spare to music, sculpture and painting, for which he showed the most extraordinary aptitude and versatility. He also began to write. When cruising on board the "Bougainville," he noted in a diary some impressions of the coast of Brittany which reveal remarkable qualities of style and poetry. The most farsighted of his schoolmates saw in him an exceptionally bright young man and admired him; but he remained, though courteous, distant and reserved. As a first-class midshipman, he embarked on "La Flore" for a cruise in Polynesia and for a few weeks stopped at Tahiti. The Franco-German War was over, and at Papeete, Queen Pomaré, sovereign only in name, but a pleasant hostess, invited the officers of the ship to picturesque celebrations. Viau felt deeply the charm emanating both from the enchanting scenery and from the voluptuous natives of this "new Cythera." This charm, today a thing of the past, he was to evoke a few years later in 'Rarahu.' In 1876 he was sent on "The Gladiator" which was at that time stationed at Constantinople; there he met Mongel Bey, a brilliant French engineer. Mariel, in his monograph, quotes the latter thus:—

"I made the acquaintance of Viau a very short time after his arrival. He struck me as a young man, cold, collected, and reserved, probably very shy, and this made him appear distant. Of small stature, nearly beardless, he looked like an adolescent and this youthful appearance was emphasized by the short coat of an English midshipman which he affected. This frail appearance was deceptive, for he was remarkably muscular and an expert in all athletic sports. At our luncheons in the officers' quarters, he took little part in our conversation, except when it referred to the enchanted isles of the Pacific Ocean. During the two years he remained on the 'Gladiator,' Viau fraternised with none of his colleagues, took part in none of their pleasures; he always went on shore alone, and, when his duties permitted it, would absent himself for long periods; we were startled to meet him in some out of the way section of Stamboul, dressed as a Turk, and hobnobbing with natives. Many thought him of little intelligence and rather dull. I frequently protested against these judgments, which I knew were ill-founded. Often I had met Viau alone on duty, and then he, so reserved in the presence of his fellow-officers, became a most interesting talker. I recall our lengthy evening conversations on board the 'Gladiator' in the Bay of Therapia under the marvellous moonlights of the Bosphorus; he kept me under a spell with his memories of the Pacific; his eyes grew dim; his speech became slower and slower until he would suddenly stop; then after a silence, which I was careful not to disturb, he would start again in his narrative without any apparent connection with what he had said at first, and I felt then that sort of melancholy charm which has always impressed me since, when reading his books. More than once and with blunt directness, I questioned him on his impressions of Stamboul, hoping to draw him out as to the mysterious life he was leading. He always answered with some platitude, and I did not dare to go any further; nevertheless, although he always had been absolutely silent on this subject, I am convinced that he was living then the pretty romance of Aziyadé, for details of the book dovetailed so accurately with little facts of which I have kept a very clear memory, that I have little doubt as to the reality of his heroine. Thus I have known Viau at the time of Aziyadé and he told me the first chapters of 'Rarahu.' When the 'Mariage de Loti' appeared, I recognised in it entire pages of the stories told me by Viau and I ran to tell my friend Achille, the living encyclopedia of contemporary literature who kept "La Librarie Nouvelle," of this frightful case of plagiarism; he reassured me condescendingly, revealing the fact that Viau and Loti were the same man."

In January, 1879, 'Aziyadé' appeared under the title 'Extracts from the Diary of a Lieutenant in the English Navy who entered the service of Turkey January 10, 1876, killed at the siege of Kars, October 27, 1877.' The book is made up of letters sent by the hero, Loti, to his elder sister and to his friend Plunkett, who was in actual life one of the author's colleagues of the French Navy, Commander Jousselin, himself a talented writer. The book passed unnoticed; to tell the truth, it is a curious jumble of declamatory tirades, marred by cynicism, and marvellous descriptions of the Orient penned by a consummate artist. In spite of this failure, Loti (as we may now call the young author) went on writing and soon sent to the publisher Calmann-Lévy the manuscript of 'Rarahu,' extracts from his diary of his trip in Polynesia. This time the success was tremendous, both with the public and the critics. Jules Lemaître declared he had never been so deeply moved by a book. The enthusiastic Daudet formed with the young man a friendship that death alone was to break, and introduced him to the little realistic coterie of the Goncourts, whose influence, so strong on many young writers of the time, remained powerless on Loti's intense personality. The 'Mariage de Loti' (the title by which 'Rarahu' is better known) was far superior to 'Aziyadé,' for the lengthy and declamatory monologues which disfigured the earlier book have entirely disappeared.

In 1881 came 'Le Roman d'un Spahi,' a description of the sunburnt and desolate Africa which grips the heart to the point of pain. It is more artistic than 'Rarahu,' but far less pleasant to read. 'Fleurs d'Ennui' revealed a new Loti, witty, full of humour and totally different from the dreamer the public had thus far known. It was followed in 1883 by 'Mon Frère Yves.' The success this time was astonishing for all; even the critics who seemed the least accessible to the charm of such a book bowed before its unquestionable power and art. 'Pêcheur d'Islande,' probably the most perfect of Loti's books, although not the most attractive, appeared in 1886.

Viau, now a lieutenant, had made, in 1883, a campaign in China, and was present at the death of that great sailor, Admiral Courbet, who was at the same time a great man. The memories he brought back gave him the material for 'Propos d'Exil,' containing pages of the most moving grandeur; and also the material for two books on Japan, 'Madame Chrysanthème' and 'Japonneries d'Automne' which enlarged his circle of readers. On his return from the Orient, Loti was promoted Lieutenant-Commander and given command of the "Javelot," the French guardship which was stationed on the Bidassoa, a small stream which divides

France and Spain; on account of a sandbar the guardship could not put to sea, so Loti had really become for a time a landlubber. He took advantage of his enforced leisure to write 'Le Roman d'un Enfant,' memories of his childhood, full of freshness and melancholy. In March, 1889, he went far into the interior of Morocco, as an aide to the French minister, Patenôtre. On his return he gave us in 'Au Maroc' a description of his long rides through the fields of iris and daffodils in bloom, recalling to life for the sympathetic reader the mystery of holy cities still unknown to Europeans, the customs and manners of tribes still unspoiled by contact with civilisation. 'De la Pitié et de la Mort,' published a little later, will not satisfy those who look to Loti for the traveller who observes and depicts. It is made up of dreams and keen but morbid impressions suggested by various personal experiences. It is none the less one of his most intimate and self-revealing works.

On April 7, 1892, Loti was elected to the French Academy, where he took the place of Octave Feuillet. Soon after, he published 'Fantômes d'Orient,' a sequel to 'Aziyadé.' The plot is even simpler than that of the earlier book, but the composition is far better and the poetic sentiment so charming that it really might be considered as a poem in prose. He next wrote 'L'Exilé' (in large part consecrated to Carmen Sylvia, Queen of Roumania, a clever writer and one of Loti's most faithful friends), and 'Matelot,' another sailor's story.

In 1894 the wanderlust took hold of him again, and, evidently moved by the remembrances of the Bible which his mother used to read to him when he was but a child, he left for the Holy Land; starting through Egypt, pilgrim fashion, he went to Jerusalem through the Gulf of Akaba, the Desert of Petra, and then wandered through Galilee to Damascus. From this trip he got material for three volumes; 'The Desert' is a masterpiece of description, without even a hint of plot, but calling up vividly before the eyes of the reader all the desolation of the sandy solitudes, all the anxiety of unexpected meetings with the fierce Bedouins; it is filled with such an overwhelming sympathy with the ancestral life of the nomadic tribes that the reader feels an intense desire to drop all the paraphernalia of civilisation and return to the simple ways of farback generations. In the second book, 'Jerusalem,' we feel that the author has been disappointed in his expectations; he was seeking faith and found only dead stones. In 'Galilee' there is more poetry and perhaps more religious feeling, but it is not with the joy of recovered truth that Loti returns to civilised life. He foresees a sad future: bleak ages which have already begun with the death of the heavenly dreams of primitive Christianity; he foresees the coming of a materialised and tyrannical democracy whose victims will not have even the consolations of hope and prayer.

'Ramuntcho' is an idyllic story of the Basque country, the elements of which the author had gathered when in command of the "Javelot." From the point of view of mere technique, it is one of the best connected and cleverly composed books of Loti, for there is a real plot—a detail about which Loti did not often take much pains. Spain had always attracted French writers; Loti's 'Figures et Choses qui passaient' and 'Reflets sur la sombre

Route' are impressions interesting to compare with those of Barrès; both understood the melancholy and sensuous ardour of Spain better than any other writer of the present day, and that through absolutely different mental processes.

About this time an event took place which might have had considerable effect on Loti's life. A minister of the navy, under the pretext of rejuvenating the staff, retired a certain number of lieutenant-commanders. Lieutenant-Commander Viau, in spite of his success as a writer, still loved his naval career, and with his colleagues, he appealed from this arbitrary measure to the Council of State with the result that he was not only reinstated, but promoted. Coming back from a trip to India and Persia, Loti started, two days later, for China, as first aide-de camp to Admiral Potier. It was during the Boxers' War, and, sent on a mission to Pekin, Commander Viau was billeted in the palace of the Empress, in the very centre of the sacred imperial city. In 'Les Derniers Jours de Pékin' he described the siege of the Legations. Going on to Japan, he wrote 'La Troisième Jeunesse de Madame Prune,' which is a sequel to 'Madame Chrysanthème.' From his trip to Persia he had brought back the idea of two books, one of which 'L'Inde (sans les Anglais)' provoked some commotion in England by its severe judgments; but Loti was never an admirer of western civilisation, and his sincerity was undeniable. 'Vers Ispahan' is a simple travel book, written with the art of a poet. Appointed commander of the cruiser "Le Vautour," Loti passed nearly two years in the Near East. He wrote then 'Les Désenchantées,' containing charming pictures of the shores of the Bosphorus (which always seemed to Loti a paradise on earth) and also clever psychological studies of the Turkish woman of high rank caught as in a vice between the limitations of harem life and the unrest arising from a modern education. A trip to Egypt produced 'La Mort de Philæ,' a counterpart of 'L'Inde sans les Anglais'; like the latter, it is a bitter criticism of English administration of Oriental countries. About this time, Loti made some unsuccessful incursions into dramatic authorship and incidentally visited New York, which he naturally found very little to his taste.

In 1913, when Turkey was near to being crushed under the onslaught of the Balkan armies, Loti, without hesitation, took her part and wrote 'La Turquie agonisante.' It had always been his generous custom to take up the cudgels for the weaker and this time he was pleading for his true love; Tahiti, India, the Far East, Persia interested him, but in Constantinople he was at home. On certain sides of his nature he is akin to the Turks. "The Turks love the past, immutability and stagnation" —and that is what entranced Loti, who abominated our feverish life and was shocked by the transitoriness of things. Considering Loti's temperament, his point of view is perfectly natural, for the progressive europeanisation or americanisation of the Orient will not make it any more attractive for artistic souls who find there a peaceful and picturesque change from the noise and bustle of western life.

At the beginning of the Great War, Commander Viau, who had been retired, asked to be reinstated, and thanks to his remarkable physical condition, he was allowed to resume his rank in the Navy. He did active service for a time, but his age told on him and he had to accept less strenuous work, though he showed everywhere the utmost bravery and devotion. His pen did not remain idle, and he found time to write 'La Hyène enragée' (1916), 'L'Outrage des Barbares' (1917), 'L'Horreur Allemande' (1918) in which he flays the aggressor with his usual lyricism, kindled by righteous indignation. As a contrast in 1920 he came back to memories of his adolescence in 'Prime Jeunesse,' as charming, perhaps more mysterious and moving, than 'Le Roman d'un Enfant.' Besides these thirty-odd volumes of novels and travel, Loti published a few short stories, the best known of which are 'Un Vieux,' and 'Les Trois Dames de la Kasbah.'

Loti's works do not really fall into the ordinary classifications; they are neither novels in the strict meaning of the word, nor travel books; they are impressions. Loti is the greatest impressionist of the pen. He does not show the reader landscapes, monuments, personages, but he revives before us and in us the sentiments he felt himself in the presence of these personages, monuments and landscapes. His peculiar faculty of vision has struck critics in many different ways. Paul Sirven considers it as "healthy, youthful, frank, in no way blasé," and he adds:

> "What places Loti far above the simpler artists, although at times he affects an airy scepticism, although he has little invention and only a superficial psychology, is that he is always deeply moved and intensely vibrant. . . . He is a poet, a real poet, and it is on account of that rare gift that he will survive."

His descriptions are absolutely subjective; and his psychology is not deep; he excels, however, in penetrating the chiaroscuro of the soul so as to render the subtlest and most elusive emotions. He does it by a succession of light touches, all of them referring to a sensation. Motives are for him a closed book. 'Le Roman d'un Spahi' is a good example of this; the drama remains obscure because Loti does not even try to explain the disintegrating and debasing effect of the tropical climate of Africa upon a European temperament. His imagination is not inventive; there is little action in any of his books, in some of them none at all. He hates the bourgeois, but the clever craftsmanship of Flaubert, Goncourt, Gautier is conspicuously absent from his work. His vocabulary is one of the poorest to be found in French literature, his syntax faulty. The clauses have, so to speak, no backbone; often there is no verb; sentences remain unfinished, the words are vague, there are sometimes only some impressionistic notations ending in dots; it is left to the reader to imagine the rest.

He does not believe in the minute description so dear to his predecessors. But he has a keener sense than they of respective values. He detects at once what is major and what is minor. He translates his impressions in colours, perfumes, savours, sounds, selecting always the essential in the happy-go-lucky way of the gifted artist who realises without effort what would demand hours of hard work from another. His extraordinary sensibility reacts on his soul, always ready, always eager for new impressions. Every country he has described has found in him its true interpreter, be it Montenegro "burnt and torn as the remnants of a formidable chaos"; Senegal "with its fetid marshes, noxious effluvia, stagnant waters and the everlasting sadness of the land of

Cham hovering above the whole"; be it Tonkin, Formosa or Japan, he has always discovered the visual expression which summarises the aspect of the land. His characters live, but it is a peculiar life which makes them blend with the landscape and give it the final touch of life and reality.

Love is the only one of the deep human sentiments he has treated at length, and there again his heroines are part and parcel of the whole; the voluptuous and mysterious Aziyadé is the soul of Constantinople; the restless and brutal Fa-tou-gaye that of darkest Africa; Rarahu is a child of the Seven Seas, Madame Chrysanthème incarnates Japan, the chaste and noble Gaud is a true Breton, the coquettish but pious Gracieuse a characteristic Basque. Friendship among men, that open and frank feeling, so much more staunch and disinterested than passionate love, has a high place in his work. In spite of his limitations, Loti portrays in various forms the most intimate and profound of human sentiments.

But he was also the poet of death, for death always haunted this perpetual traveller for whom each new departure was "a little death." He, so fond of youth, health, physical strength and beauty, always suffered at the mere thought of the transitoriness of life. He was tortured by the idea of diminution, of decay, in a way that may fairly be called pagan. In his pantheistic philosophy, he found no solace, and he was unable to recover the stern faith of his ancestors once it was lost; that anguish never left him and is ever present in his books, sometimes so intense that it seems to discourage all desire for action. This may explain the reproach that his books are depressing—too much impressionism, exotism, romanticism. Of romanticism, the artificial romanticism of the exaggerated ego, which was flayed by Leconte de Lisle in 'Les Montreurs,' we find traces not only in 'Aziyadé,' and 'Fleurs d'Ennui,' but also in 'Le Roman d'un Spahi,' 'Le Roman d'un Enfant,' 'Jérusalem' and even 'Prime Jeunesse.' "I cry aloud my pain," he says, "to beg for the sympathy of the passers-by, to call to them in an anguish always greater as I feel nearer and nearer inevitable destruction and return to dust."

His appeal is saved from vulgarity by its very frankness; it is so poignant and finds so true an echo in our own souls that we are moved in spite of ourselves, losing all power to judge. "Loti," said Jules Lemaître, "is, I think, the most delicate machine to create sensations that I have ever met. He causes me too much pleasure and too keen a pleasure; he goes too deep into my flesh to permit me to judge him impartially." Henry Bordeaux analyses the secret of his power in a passage so suggestive that we cannot do better than quote it in conclusion.

> "Loti can speak of nothing but his own heart. By what magic does he make us share his passionate secrets? By music. . . .
>
> "The colorists, Flaubert, Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, Taine, describe faithfully, often minutely, the spectacles which struck them; first the detail and then the whole with the very precise outline of concrete words; other artists, Lamartine sometimes, and Renan nearly always, have recourse to rhythm, cadences, sonority, to express, not their visions, which cannot be expressed, but the very emotion they felt. The former give more importance to plastic forms, the latter to their own sensitiveness. For the first, the external world exists *per se;* for the second, it depends on us, but for Loti, it is we who are dependent on nature. Music, in expressing sensation, suggests images. The most sensuous of all arts, when it is not the most idealistic, is

thus linked to the land, the climate, the soul of the country; it becomes the expression of this intimate character. This miracle of musical art can be realised through the rhythm of style, the harmony of words. Loti realises it constantly. Read aloud, his phrases caress like the sound of a violin. The languor of his style and the subtle soothing of its sweetness increase the sensitiveness of our heartstrings. Our eyes do not see the exotic landscapes which he describes, but we live in them, so to speak, troubled, fascinated, bewitched. We understand at last nature's power of possession which holds us by thousands of strong and imperceptible bonds. Indifferent to men, rebellious against ideas, neither observer nor painter, Loti is the magician of nature."

Pierre Loti died at his home at Rochefort on June 10, 1923.

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CHAPTER VI

ANATOLE FRANCE (1844–   )

Anatole France, in his early essay on Vigny, spoke of "the genius" of Corneille and "the talent" of Racine, and as he was known to esteem the latter writer more highly, an explanation of the sense in which he used these words seemed to be called for. He gave it many years later in an article in 'Le Temps'; romanticism (he says) has lent a mysterious value to the word "genius" as if it implied something superior to human nature, but a genius is simply a man with an exceptional natural gift; when he has, by meditation and training, brought that gift to intelligent and reflective harmony, he may be said to have talent. It is "talent" (if we use the word in this special sense) that Anatole France has.

"Even genius," he says in the same essay on Vigny, "begins by imitation and arrives at originality by degrees." "Creative genius" is a term he will hardly admit. St. Catherine in 'The Isle of the Penguins' says tersely: "The imagination assembles and compares; it never creates." France expresses the same idea elsewhere: "Man is absolutely incapable of imagining what he has neither seen nor heard, nor felt, nor tasted. . . . All our ideas come to us by our senses, and imagination consists not in creating ideas, but in assembling them." The assembling and comparing of ideas is necessarily a slow process, and one would expect the imaginative author of this type to reach maturity only after the lapse of years. So, at least, it was in Anatole France's own case.

The circumstances of his birth and early education were singularly favourable to the development of "talent" as he has defined it. He was born in Paris, on the left bank of the Seine, where his father kept a book shop on the Quay Voltaire; his mother was a devout, but not a bigoted Catholic (she refused to believe in hell) and gave to her only child, who was delicate, dreamy, irresponsible and yet precocious, the cheerful, affectionate, and refined care he has described with so much sympathy and charm in 'Le Livre de mon Ami,' 'Pierre Nozière,' 'Le petit Pierre' and 'La Vie en Fleur.' It was she who nourished his childish imagination with stories of the Bible and legends of the saints, and who made tales for him out of the familiar sights of the nursery, the kitchen, and the farmyard. His father had been in the bodyguard of Charles X and remained a monarchist under the Empire; he was a quiet, reserved man, with scholarly tastes, and used to sign his bibliographies, "France libraire," thus bequeathing to his son, who was baptized Jacques Anatole Thibault, the name which has become famous. Little Anatole was brought into direct contact with recent French history by a sceptical grandmother, who retained her eighteenth century philosophy with its freedom of opinion and morals, and by a Bonapartiste uncle, who was a veteran of Waterloo. His own ideas, from the time that he was able to think for himself, were unwaveringly republican, but his family connections enabled him to appreciate, with sympathetic insight, other points of view, at any rate when cast in the more remote and romantic past.

All his early life was spent in Paris, mainly on the left bank of the Seine, which still preserved at that time a life of its own, almost provincial in its selfsufficing intensity, far removed from the cosmopolitan hubbub of the boulevards. The scholars and booklovers at his father's shop, where he sat quietly listening to the conversation, the bookstalls on the quays, the prints and armour and curios in the shop windows, the life of the streets as he passed to and from school—all impressed upon him that passionate admiration of French history and the French point of view which is a marked national characteristic and which no French author reveals with more consistent intensity. Further acquaintance with his native land only served to extend and deepen this filial affection. At widely separated periods of his life,—in 'Pierre Nozière' and again in 'La Voie Glorieuse'—he printed the following as the message of any French village to her children:—

> "See—I am old, but I am beautiful; my devout children have embroidered my robe with towers, steeples, crenelated battlements and belfries. I am a good mother; I teach industry and all the arts of peace. I nurse my children in my arms. Then, their task done, they go to sleep, one after another, under the grass which is cropped by the sheep. They pass; but I stay to guard their memory. I am their record. They owe everything to me, for man is man only because he remembers. My robe has been torn and my bosom pierced in war. I have received wounds which were called mortal, but I have lived because I have hoped. Learn of me this blessed hope which saved the fatherland. Think in me so as to think beyond yourselves. Look at this fountain, this hospital, this market that the fathers have bequeathed to their children. Work for your children as

your ancestors have worked for you. Each of my stones brings you a benefit and teaches you a duty. See my cathedral, my guildhall, my Hotel-Dieu, and venerate the past. But think of the future. Your sons will know what jewels you, in your time, have enchased in my robe of stone."

From a child he was interested in the things of the mind. When his godmother made him a present of a set of gymnastic appliances, he did not know what to do with them. His childish aspirations to imitate the saints by throwing his tops and marbles out of the window or to set up as a hermit in the Jardin des Plantes were promptly abandoned, and a boyish ambition to write the history of France "with all the details" was blocked by the apparition of the giant Teutobochus in the first chapter. He received his early education mainly from his mother, for his governess devoted the hours appointed for study to writing her love letters, and at a dame's school he went to he learnt nothing. From this he passed to the College Stanislas, with its aristocratic and ecclesiastical traditions, where the priests found him a docile but rather distracted pupil. He had a natural leaning toward classical culture and conceived a passionate admiration for the simplicity and beauty of Greek tragedy, which had a large share in forming his mind and style, and affected his preferences among the French writers of his time. Victor Hugo's impassioned rhetoric offended his standards of simplicity, naturalness, and lucidity; but in Renan's prose he found the classical sense of form and measure, and in Vigny's poetry "the calm and restrained beauty of the ancient Greeks."

A boyish love affair came to an unhappy ending owing to his shyly faltering "oui, monsieur," when the lady of his dreams addressed to him a simple question; but he found consolation by the sea in reading the story of Dido and returned to town to pass his examinations. A violent passion for a tragic actress also bore no untoward result and gave occasion for one of his early experiments in fiction, 'Les Désirs de Jean Servien'—of little interest except for the suggestion it gives of the spiritual *malaise* which afflicted his studious youth and of the material difficulties he had to encounter when his college days were over. He seems to have had some unfortunate experience as a school teacher, but if so, they were of short duration. He found more congenial employment in helping his father with bibliographies and writing a careful essay on 'Alfred de Vigny,' which was published when its author was only twenty-four. He had previously joined the circle of young poets known as "the Parnassians" and had collaborated with Paul Verlaine in 'La Gazette rimée,' printed by Lemerre, for whom we find him acting, a few years later, as publisher's reader. 'Les Poèmes dorés,' published in 1873, but most of them written some years earlier, are marked by the classic restraint natural to the author and characteristic of the Parnassian School, to whose leader, Leconte de Lisle, the little volume was dedicated. Leconte de Lisle was Assistant Librarian to the Senate, and about the middle seventies Anatole France worked under him there, but not for long. His second volume of poems, including a tragedy in the classical manner dealing with the conflict between paganism and Christianity, 'Les Noces corinthiennes,' was published in 1876.

These early poems are largely imitative, and it is noteworthy that their subjects are more often taken from books than from life, but they are of interest as indicating the young author's outlook and sympathies. He had definitely abandoned the faith of his childhood, and in 'Adieu,' written when he was 21, addressed Christ as the "beau Juif" who had robbed him of his mistress. In 'La Part de Marie,' written a year or two later, he confounds Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalen, and identifies, as in the earlier poem, sensual with spiritual love. It is true that in the preface to 'Les Noces corinthiennes' he professes "sincere respect" for the sacred subjects he is dealing with, though he acknowledges that he regards the Christian verities merely as beautiful illusions; and he closes 'La Danse des Morts' with the line "Blessed are they who believed in hell" (since they at least looked forward to a future life); but it is with evident sympathy that he develops the voluptuous side of paganism in antagonism to Christian asceticism. This is to be remarked in the earliest of the poems 'La Fille de Caïn' (1864) and in many others. But it is an intellectual voluptuousness, cold and passionless. He exhorts lovers to remember in their hours of ecstacy that death is the spring of desire, and when his mistress, after a ball, whispers in his ear "For ever," he looks at the old griffins carved above her head on the high chairback and wonders how many times they have heard ephemeral beings utter eternal vows. ('La Sagesse des Griffons,' 1865.)

It is hardly surprising that the war of 1870 made scarcely a ripple on the placid current of Anatole France's intellectual youth. He was mobilised in a regiment of the national guard, and has given us a picture of himself in tunic and képi, discussing with a comrade a passage from his pocket Virgil under the walls of the fort de la Faisanderie, while the Prussian shells were falling into the Marne in front of them. His poems in 1870 and 1871 bear no trace of the national catastrophe; he writes of a moth, transfixed by a collector's pin, and flying off with it to die in its native reeds; of a passing glimpse of a lady on horseback; of a battle between two stags in the forest. The last ('Les Cerfs,' September, 1871) reveals a view of Nature which is at once evolutionary and optimistic. The dying stag has had his share of the joys of life, and his victorious rival, in winning his mate, is carrying out the divine plan:

"L'Amour, l'Amour puissant, la Volupté féconde,
Voilà le dieu qui crée incessament le monde,
Le père de la vie et des destins futurs!
C'est par l'Amour fatal, par ces luttes cruelles,
Que l'univers s'anime en des formes plus belles,
S'achève et se connait en des esprits plus purs."

At this time Anatole France still spoke of the "certitudes" of science and had faith in the beneficent processes of evolution. Many years after, in an article on 'Paul Bourget,' republished in 'La Vie Littéraire,' he recalled these days of youthful enthusiasm when he walked through the garden of the Luxembourg and the Avenue of the Observatoire, engaged in ardent discussion with half a dozen other young admirers of Darwin, Spencer and Taine:—

> "Eighteen years ago we were enthusiastic determinists. There were indeed one or two neo-catholics among us, but they were full of disquiet. The fatalists, on the other hand, displayed a serene confidence, which (alas!) they have not maintained. We know well today that this romance of the universe is as deceptive as the others, but at that time the books of Darwin were our Bible; the eulogies with which Lucretius celebrates the

divine Epicurus appeared to us hardly sufficient praise for the English naturalist. We, too, said with ardent faith: 'A man has come who has freed mankind from vain terrors.' I cannot refrain from recalling once more those noble visits we paid, Darwin in hand, to the old Jardin des Plantes . . . . I entered as into a sanctuary the halls of the Museum filled with all kinds of organic forms, from fossil molluscs and the long jaws of the primitive saurians to the arched spine of the elephant and the hand of the gorilla. In the middle of the last hall rose a marble Venus, the symbol of the gentle but invincible force by which all animated races multiply. Who will give back to me the ingenuous and sublime emotion which stirred in my breast before this lovely type of human beauty? I contemplated it with the intellectual satisfaction given by the encounter of something one has foreseen. All the organic forms had insensibly conducted me to this the flower of them all. How I imagined that I understood life and love! How sincerely I believed I had seized the divine plan!"

In his prose this spirit of exultant trust in evolutionary processes finds a record only in disillusioned reminiscences. When he began to publish short stories, he was still a determinist, but without faith and without enthusiasm. They betray a mood of blank discouragement, unrelieved by technical skill, and not sufficiently adorned by the graces of style the writer was to acquire later. The first, 'Jocaste,' has little classical about it except its title, the connecting incident between the heroine of Sophocles and Helen Haviland being somewhat unskilfully introduced. The main literary influence is that of Dickens, eulogized in the original preface as "one of the most powerful creative artists of the century." The impossible Haviland and his still more impossible servant Groult are grotesques after the Dickens manner but without the vitality with which the English novelist was able to invest his creations. How far the story lacks his humour, may be judged by comparing Fellaire de Sisac with Micawber, upon whom he is apparently modelled. The plot moves with Dickensian slowness, and in spite of two murders and a suicide fails to arrest attention. The final chapter, recounting, at disproportionate length, the fate of René Longuemare seems almost superfluous. Evidently France had not yet found his way.

His second attempt, 'Le Chat Maigre,' was hardly more successful; this time the immediate model was Daudet, though there are still traces of Dickensian caricature. In the original preface France acknowledged that the main characters were mad; most of them are negroes or mulattoes from Hayti, stranded in the slums of Paris. They are curious but not interesting, mere fantasies of the author's brain, drawn without sympathy or humour.

It was in 'Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard' (duly crowned by the Academy) that Anatole France at last found a medium suited to his talent and established his reputation. The diary-form of the novel, extending over twenty years, is suited to the author's natural manner, which is essentially autobiographical, and to his lack of skill in plot-construction. As it is, the story divides itself into two distinct episodes, loosely connected by the presence in each of the main character and of the precious manuscript, which plays so prominent a part in the first half of the book, and then disappears until the very end, when its reappearance is so little stressed that many readers pass over the incident without realising that it gives the novel its title. Jeanne's relation to Sylvestre Bonnard was apparently borrowed from Theuriet's 'Abbé David,' in which the hero is a priest, and this perhaps accounts for a certain ecclesiastical atmosphere Sylvestre Bonnard carries with him, as well as for the necessity the author was under to make Jeanne the granddaughter instead of the daughter of Clementine when he revised the story twenty years later. Sylvestre Bonnard is the most attractive of the many guises under which Anatole France has presented his own personality in his work; he is entirely free from the sensuality of most of the others and has the easily-carried erudition, the gentle irony, the kind hearted tolerance, and the personal charm of his original and creator. The writer's style has already attained that exquisite perfection which was to characterize all his subsequent work, and there are none of those outbursts against religion and morality which were later to annoy, disgust or appal the tenderminded reader. In its delicate studies of character, its descriptions of natural scenery and of the streets of Paris, and its carefully restrained sentiment, the novel is a perpetual delight to lovers of rare and refined beauty.

In the preface to 'La Vie Littéraire,' the first volume of which was published in 1888, Anatole France says that he had not written a single book for six years past; it is a little difficult to reconcile this with the publication in 1885 of 'Le Livre de mon Ami,' upon which an article in the 1888 volume implies that the author was engaged in 1880. Presumably 'Le Livre de mon Ami' was finished soon after the latter date, and 'Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard' and 'Les Désirs de Jean Servien,' which appeared in 1881 and 1882 respectively, were completed still earlier. In any case the editor of 'Le Temps' is entitled to our gratitude for arousing Anatole France from a period of non-production, for the occasional articles first published as current literary criticisms in this newspaper afforded him a congenial opportunity for the exercise of his talents. He had no critical system to apply, develop or exploit; he was not attached to either of the prevailing literary cults, symbolism in poetry and naturalism in fiction; his attitude was receptive and conservative. He wrote sympathetically of Balzac and Georges Sand, of Sully-Prudhomme and Coppée, of Alexandre Dumas fils and Maupassant, of Bourget and Loti, of the Goncourts and Marie Bashkirtseff; it was only an offence against patriotism, such as 'Le Cavalier Miserey,' or against beauty, such as 'La Terre,' that provoked him to indignation. Then he could be severe enough. He rebuked Zola sternly for grossness and indecency, for the unpardonable sin of lack of taste. "His work is bad and he is one of those miserable people of whom it might be said that it would have been better if they had never been born." But these outbursts of wrath were rare. Following his own definition of the good critic as "one who relates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces," he contented himself for the most part with appreciative reflections of his wide reading, and allowed what he did not approve to pass without remark or with a little gentle ridicule by the way. When the danger from naturalism had gone by, he put in a good word for Zola and acknowledged that the movement had accomplished great things. He came to excuse the innovations in versification and to approve the vagueness of the Symbolists. His biting condemnation of Ohnet's 'Volonté' as an affront to good sense and good taste is exceptional and was on that account all the more effective.

Some critics have discerned a change of tone and attitude in the third volume of ‘La Vie Littéraire’ and have even marked the clash with Brunetière apropos of Bourget’s ‘Le Disciple’ as the point of transition from gentle irony to embittered scepticism; but the intellectual independence which Anatole France then claimed he might have asserted at any time during the preceding twenty years, if the occasion for such a declaration had arisen, and his general outlook at the end of the series seems as free from bitterness as at the beginning. In one of the last articles he tells us how, after reading Barrès, he looked out on the starry sky, and the thought occurred to him that perhaps this planet was like a rotten fruit, smitten with disease and regarded with horror by the rest of the universe. But, even so, he adds, “let us cultivate our garden. It is not our business to experiment on life, but to live it. Let us keep simple-hearted and be men of good will; and divine peace will be upon us.”

What really distinguishes Anatole France’s prose work from about this time to the end of his career is an element of voluptuousness first to be remarked in any fulness in ‘Thaïs’ (1890); there are hints of it before, especially in his poetry, and it becomes after this date so constant a characteristic of his fiction that it must be accepted as one of the elements of his genius. Superficially ‘Thaïs’ holds the balance even between restraint and indulgence, for saint becomes sinner, and sinner becomes saint, but while the temptation and fall of Paphnuce are studied in great detail, Thaïs, after her conversion, sinks into insignificance. Primarily the novel is a psychological analysis of ascetism, subtly and profoundly hostile in spirit; only secondarily is it a historical novel, giving the author scope for his extensive erudition, which is kept within the bounds of art, except for the disproportionate length of the philosophical discussion at the banquet. In construction 'Thaïs' is a distinct advance on anything the author had yet done; and the style is perfect throughout.

'Le Procurateur de Judée,' the first story in 'L'Étui de Nacre' (1892), marks Anatole France's acquisition, after experiments extending over many years, of the technique of the short story, which had in the intervening period been brought to perfection by Maupassant; incidentally the story brings into clear relief the anti-Christian attitude of the author—taken, no doubt, nearly thirty years before, but not yet so openly manifested.

This anti-Christian attitude, combined with almost brutal sensuality, recurs in 'La Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque' (1893), which was immediately followed by a sequel, 'Les Opinions de M. Jérôme Coignard.' Coignard is an eighteenth century Falstaff endowed with the Shakespearean hero's huge bulk and love of good cheer, wine and women, but lacking his humour and broad humanity; it is mainly malice on the author's part to put so thorough-going a sceptic and loose-liver into an abbé's gown, though this gives an excuse for investing him with much learning and a delight in philosophical disputation. The alchemistic and rosicrucian lore displayed in the earlier volume is not sufficiently enlivened by the adventures, too often amorous in character, of the abbé and his pupil and supposed biographer, Jacques Tournebroche; the latter volume, in which these elements almost disappear, is of higher interest because it permits Coignard (who is really, of course, France himself) to exert his intellectual versatility on issues of current application. His lack of faith in human progress, in science, in democracy, is made as evident as his dislike of militarism and penal justice. Man is a "wicked monkey," "a foolish beast," and if you want to make men good and kind, free, moderate, generous, you are speedily brought to a desire to kill them; Coignard regarded men with kindly contempt, because he recognised the short distance that separated them from the gorilla. It is not a cheerful doctrine, though the expression of it is often amusing. As if to justify the numerous borrowings in these two books, France put in the last volume of 'La Vie Littéraire' a defence of plagiarism, in which he says: "An idea is of no value apart from the form in which it is expressed; to give a new form to an old idea is the whole of art and the only creation possible to humanity."

In 'Le Lys Rouge' Anatole France attempted the psychological novel of the world of fashion, after the manner of his friend Bourget, whose detailed descriptions of artistic interiors and elaborate analyses of passionate souls are carefully reproduced. But few books of this kind make less appeal to the emotions; the author's intellectual power endows his lovers with an absolutely cold sensuality, without a breath of real passion. There is much clever talk, in which the author puts his pet heresies into the mouths, not merely of his avowed spokesman, the novelist and journalist Paul Vence, but of Thérèse, of her first lover Le Ménil, and of the Socialist poet, Choulette, whose eccentric personality reproduces some of the vagaries of Verlaine. There are other contemporary portraits which gave the book a passing notoriety, but there is little in it that the author has not said as well or better elsewhere. If the characters live at all, it is in the rarified air of intellectual detachment peculiar to Anatole France, and entirely unsuited to a novel of this type. Dechartre's jealousy is too morbid, too inhuman to evoke the reader's sympathy, and his mistress has the gift of eloquent self-analysis, never the accent of passion. Her parting speech to her first lover is pure Anatole France, but its cold beauty may be excused by the plea that the real separation had come some time before. In the final scene of passionate anguish, however, she still utters passages of intellectual symmetry such as this:—

> "I feared to grow old, for your sake, as well as my own, that the beauty of our love might not come to an end. It would have done better not to be born. Yes, it would have been better if I had not been born. Had I a presentiment of it when as a little girl under the lime trees of Joinville, near the Couronne, before the nymphs of marble I wished to die."

As a picture of the emptiness and malice of fashionable life, the novel may perhaps serve a moral purpose which was certainly not intended by the author; as an analysis of the human heart, or even of sex impulses, it is unconvincing, in spite of (and partly because of) the invariable smoothness and delicacy of its polished phrases. It fails almost as much from superabundance of intelligence as from lack of feeling.

In the same year (1894) France published 'Le Jardin d'Épicure,' a series of detached essays or reflections which had previously appeared in the 'Écho de Paris.' They present in the most complete and direct form Anatole France's philosophical views, as 'La Vie Littéraire' embodies his literary judgments, both being written in an easy, almost capricious fashion which is by no means so artless as it appears at first sight. He had no faith in systems of philosophy; he enjoyed metaphysical treatises as novels more amusing than the others, but no truer. Metaphysics appeared to him a finer, nobler game than draughts or chess,—but still a game. "Human intelligence may serve us some day to manufacture a universe; to understand this one, never." Scientific truth does not differ essentially from other truth; it deals with phenomena, with appearances, can never penetrate the substance, or know anything of the real nature of things. Æsthetics rest on ethics, ethics on sociology, sociology on biology, and before these sciences rest on solid bases, millions of years will have gone by and the world will have come to an end. Not that this is a reason for despair. Ignorance is a necessary condition, not merely of happiness, but of existence; to know the truth would mean annihilation. We live by illusion, and the sadness of this generation springs from the loss of hope and faith, so that "evil and pain lose their significance, and appear an odious jest, a sinister farce." Yet suffering is the source of passion, of poetry, above all of virtue. We must not lose hope—hope, not in humanity, but in the universal anguish of which evolution is the material law, making us march toward a divine and inevitable aim, to be attained by the inconceivable beings who will issue from man, as man has issued from the brute. Meanwhile, man should regard his fellow sufferers with Irony and Pity—Pity which makes life sacred, and Irony which smiles at wicked and foolish people whom we might otherwise be feeble enough to hate.

Incidentally to the development of this pessimistic epicureanism, we have many subtle, acute, and amusing observations on all manner of things—on history, on style, on jealousy, on gambling, on women, their education, and the natural inclination of some of them to the conventual life. The book has been described by a hostile critic as "the unbeliever's manual," and there is no question that it shows a marked tendency towards intellectual nihilism; but Anatole France can hardly expect us to pay more reverence to his philosophical creed than he does to other people's, and the reader who does not agree at all with the author's arguments and conclusions may find much to delight and stimulate his intelligence by the way.

The 'Écho de Paris' was also the medium for a number of short stories, chiefly of medieval Italy, gathered together in 1895 in a volume entitled 'Le Puits de Sainte Claire,' and for the series of novels, begun in 1895, which ultimately took shape as the four volumes of 'Histoire Contemporaine.' The story bears the marks of its occasional production and of the author's unwillingness or incapacity to devise a regular plot. The first book, 'L'Orme du Mail,' begins with the striking incident of the dismissal from the seminary of the ardent and sympathetic young candidate for the priesthood, Piedagnel, by the stern and bigoted Superior. The circumstances of the dismissal make it peculiarly cruel in its suddenness and Piedagnel leaves with a bitter hatred of the priesthood, "imperishable and abundant enough to fill his whole life." The impressionable reader expects that the consequences of this hatred will be developed in the course of the story, for his interest and perhaps his sympathies have been keenly aroused. But Piedagnel disappears from the story never to return, except for a passing mention when M. Bergeret, in a crisis of his domestic misfortunes, goes to get his shoes mended by Piedagnel's father. It is only in Chapter VII that we meet for the first time M. Bergeret, the provincial professor, whose personality gives the volume and the series the rather vague centre of interest they may be said to possess. M. Bergeret himself develops, not with entire consistency, under the hands of his creator and original, for Anatole France made him in his own image, and the resemblance increases with an increasingly sympathetic portrayal as the series proceeds; at the beginning Bergeret is an intellectual Ishmaelite, with every man's hand against him, even in his own family; but halfway through the series we suddenly discover that one of the three hostile daughters is sufficiently friendly to be assigned to her father in the separation of her estranged parents. Madame Bergeret, who absorbs a large share of our attention in Vol. II, overflows into Volume III, and then disappears. The daughter, Pauline, whose name has been hitherto unknown, comes into increasing prominence; so does Bergeret's sister, Zoé, of whose very existence the reader of the first two volumes is absolutely ignorant. It is evident that a novelist who planned his work beforehand and had any sense of construction would have arranged matters differently.

But the 'Histoire Contemporaine,' as its title implies, is very much more than a story of the fortunes of M. Bergeret and his family; it is an account of contemporary life and thought, in the first three volumes in an unnamed provincial town in the north of France, in the last volume at Paris, M. Bergeret's promotion to the Sorbonne serving as a connecting link. Provincial society is exhibited chiefly in its ecclesiastical, aristocratic, intellectual and political ramifications, with merely an occasional glance at the life of the humbler classes, as when the mob comes to break M. Bergeret's windows and gives occasion for his philosophic meditation on the psychology of the common people:—

> "Pecus is fed on ancient lies. His inclination to error is considerable. Realising his incapacity to dissipate hereditary prejudice by reason, he prudently conserves the inheritance of fables which come to him from his ancestors. This kind of wisdom keeps him from errors which would be too hurtful. He clings to established errors. He is imitative; he would appear more so if he did not involuntarily falsify what he copies. These falsifications produce what is called progress. Pecus does not reflect. So it is unjust to say that he deceives himself. But everything deceives him, and he is miserable. He never doubts, since doubt is the effect of reflection, yet his ideas change incessantly, and sometimes he passes from stupidity to violence. He has no excellence, for all which excels detaches itself immediately from him and ceases to belong to him. But he errs, languishes, suffers. And we must keep for him a profound and pained sympathy. It is even fitting to venerate him, for from him proceed all virtue, all beauty, all human glory. Poor Pecus!"

It must be said that the social superiors of Pecus do not come off any better. The ancient aristocracy is represented as lost in stupid and narrow prejudices; the newer nobility as grasping climbers without morals and without taste. The ecclesiastics are either ignorant bigots or sleek intriguers. The politicians are vulgar and cynical schemers, seeking their own interests without a thought for the public good. Even in the academic circle, apart from M. Bergeret's intellectual influence, one finds hardly a breath of life or freedom. In this whole society above the working class the most sympathetic figure is that of Général Cartier de Chalmot, who passes his time innocently and uselessly, fighting bloodless battles in his study by means of a card catalogue containing the name of every soldier in his division. The women, if not blindly devout, have neither minds nor morals, unless an exception must be made of Madame Dutilleul, "imperishable widow of four husbands, suspected of everything except of love, and therefore highly respected." Decidedly Anatole France in these volumes is not kind to the sex.

The fourth volume, 'M. Bergeret à Paris,' is largely taken up with the Dreyfus affair and loses interest for the present day reader on that account. M. Bergeret passes with his author through another transformation, and becomes a socialist and an optimist. Without sharing his political views, one may like him better in his cheerful mood, and take pleasure in his shrewd homely talk with the carpenter who is putting up his bookshelves, with his sister, his daughter, and above all, with his dog. Riquet is perhaps the most attractive, as he is certainly one of the most natural characters of the series.

Elected an officer of the Legion of Honour and a member of the Academy about the time when the 'Histoire Contemporaine' series began to appear, Anatole France, following the lead of Zola, risked academic ease and literary reputation for what he believed to be right in the Dreyfus controversy, and found himself as a consequence involved in public discussions on militarism, clericalism, socialism, and other burning issues. He came to the platform too late in life to acquire any oratorical facility, and his public speeches were really little essays intended less to be spoken than to be read. He had to sacrifice some of his ironical detachment in face of audiences little versed in the subleties of dialectic, and so far he accommodated himself without loss of dignity or principle to the new conditions. "There is peace" he said in his speech at Zola's funeral, "only in justice, which rests only in the truth. I am not speaking of philosophical truth, the subject of eternal disputes, but of that moral truth which we can all seize because it is relative, to be grasped by the senses, in conformity with our nature, and so near to us that a child may stretch out his hand and lay hold of it." About this limited relative truth he had no philosophic doubts, and he expressed his opinions with a clearness and emphasis not always free from the spirit of faction. In the speech at the inauguration of the statue of Ernest Renan at Tréguier ('Vers les Temps Meilleurs,' Vol. II) he rose to heights of noble eloquence, and his tributes to Zola were ardent and sincere. He brought to questions of international policy a generous love of freedom, keen powers of intellectual analysis, and a white flame of wit for the destruction of pretentious hypocrisy. Take for example this passage from a speech at a pacifist conference in 1905.

> "Germany is a military nation. She has a superb army. She has the best army in the world. So have we. All the nations have the best army in the world. But Germany has something more. She has for emperor a corporal, a great corporal, a perfect and finished corporal, the emperor and god of corporals, the Corporal Hohenzollern, the Corporal Lohengrin. William had

the soul and moustaches of a corporal; he was destined by profession and disposition to make war. During the fifteen years of his reign, has he made it? He has made poetry, painting, navigation (for pleasure), music, eloquence, flying, sculpture, theology, dancing—everything except war. Why?"

The reason Anatole France gave is the growth of an internationalist and pacifist proletariat. "There will still be wars. But some day universal peace will be realised—not because men will become better (that is too much to hope for) but because a new order of things, a new science, new economic necessities will impose on them a state of peace as formerly the very conditions of their existence kept them in a state of war." His faith lay in rational organization of work, and the establishment of the United States of the World.

His internationalism was closely bound up with socialism, but he was not an economist, and his socialistic propaganda was vaguely enthusiastic rather than precise and practical. Of the two most important literary expressions of it, 'Crainquebille' is a sympathetic study of a poor costermonger who in a crowded Paris street has a clash with a policeman and thus becomes an innocent victim of the majesty of the law; the idea is very cleverly worked out, but Crainquebille's naive credulity is, for the purposes of the story, carried to an extreme. The other socialistic effort, apart from mere pamphlets, is an attempt to construct a Utopia—the Federation of the Peoples of Europe in 2270. ('Sur la Pierre Blanche.') This socialistic community, whose constitution and territorial limits are somewhat vaguely indicated, has abolished private capital, money and marriage. Its industrial organization seems to rest on food tickets for each working hour; but it has contrived somehow to retain private property for personal belongings. The population question apparently takes care of itself; men and women yield to desire without shame and though there are many permanent unions, there is no bond; a woman gives herself when she will and to whom she will. It is evidently this point that interests the hero of the story more than anything else, but just as he is about to put the issue to the test, he wakes up again in the Paris of 1903. Already the author is allowing his sense of humour to play round the advocates of socialism as well as its opponents. Even in 2270 human nature is far from perfect, and the basis of human society far from secure; the intelligent people are nearly all anarchists and want to sweep away the whole structure; but they are not dangerous, as they are not suppressed.

After 1906 Anatole France withdrew more and more from public life, and gave his attention to the completion of his 'Histoire de la Vie de Jeanne d'Arc,' which had already occupied his mind for many years and was published in two large volumes in 1908. It aroused a violent controversy, for the naturalistic explanations the author gave of the miraculous elements in the career of the heroic Maid were not calculated to satisfy her devout admirers; and even among the historians his views, though carefully documented, were far from meeting with universal acceptance. He took an easy revenge on the scientific historians in 'L'Ile des Pingouins,' in which he allowed his satiric bent full play, ridiculing both patriotic and ecclesiastical tradition, and including his political associates and his personal friends (as well as, of course, his antagonists) in his universal derision of contemporary politics. Zola, the radicals, and the socialists are hardly represented in a more favourable light than the stupid generals and selfseeking politicians on the other side, and the author's reflections on the part he himself played in the Dreyfus affair are not altogether flattering. The astronomer, Bidault-Coquille, as he withdraws to his observatory, says to himself:—

> "Ought you to be regarded as a superior mind for having shown in one particular point a little more insight than the vulgar? I am afraid, on the contrary, that you have not shown any great understanding of the conditions of the intellectual and moral development of peoples. You imagined that social injustices are linked together like pearls and that to take one away was enough to unloose the whole string. That is a naive conception. You flattered yourself that by one blow you were establishing justice in your country, and in the universe. You were an honest man, a convinced idealist, without much practical philosophy. But look into your own mind, and you will recognise that in your ingenuousness you were not disinterested, that you too had a lower motive. You said to yourself: 'Let me be just and courageous once for all. Then I can repose in public esteem and the praise of the historians.' And now that you have lost your illusions, now that you know that the redressing of wrongs is a hard task, which has always to be begun over again, you return to your asteroids. You are right, but return to them modestly."

Many of the references to the Boulanger crisis and the Dreyfus affair have already lost their significance, and if the reading public of the next generation is to understand the personal and political allusions of this part of the book, it will have to be provided with notes as elaborate as are needed for a scholarly appreciation of 'Gulliver's Travels.' 'L'Ile des Pingouins' is not likely to emulate the fame of its chief model as a book for schoolboys; it is too thoroughly besmeared with sensuality, which, unlike Swift's occasional filthiness, cannot easily be omitted. Nor has the later satirist the fierce indignation and profound melancholy of his great predecessor; Anatole France has an equal contempt for humanity, but he exposes their stupidities and vices with demonic laughter. His irony in this book is withering, unrelieved by the smile of pity which the epicurean philosopher of fifteen years before had recommended as its accompaniment; and he is still further removed from the "sincere respect" which, at the beginning of his literary career, he professed for sacred things. In his long practice at travestying saintly legends, he had never shown quite such malicious ingenuity in flouting the most revered mysteries of the Christian faith, and in outraging the common sanctions of current morality. Property is simply theft, chastity a chimera, fidelity a delusion. As he has no faith in the past or the present he has no hope for the future. Civilisation, evolving to its apogee, is thus described:—

> "Those who produced things necessary to life were in lack of them, those who did not produce them had them in superabundance. 'These are,' said a member of the Institute, 'economic fatalities from which there is no escape.' The great nation lost its traditions, its intellectual culture, its art. The progress of civilisation was manifested in murderous industry, infamous speculation, hideous luxury. Its capital took on, like all other great cities, a cosmopolitan and financial character; there reigned in it an immense and regular ugliness."

The millionaires become ascetics of industrial organization, unable to see the tokens of their own wealth, incapable of experiencing the desires it might satisfy; the poor are physical degenerates with just enough intelligence to fulfil their mechanical tasks. Eventually the anarchists send the entire civilisation to deserved destruction, and humanity begins anew from the stone age the monotonous round of progress, only to arrive at the same hideous conclusion.

In this blighting review of human history, there was one point—the French Revolution—which, to the surprise of the observant reader, was passed over with a perfunctory page. The reason was that the author was already engaged on a work dealing more particularly with the events and personages of this period. 'Les Dieux ont Soif'—it was originally to have been called 'Les Autels de la Peur'—was as far from pleasing republican enthusiasts as the works immediately preceding it had been from contenting the socialists; but as a picture of the life of the time it won the approval of historical authorities, and as a work of art it is at once the most powerful and the most finished novel Anatole France produced. There is a well-rounded, though not an elaborate plot,—sufficient to enable the author to show us the people of the time, not merely as soldiers and politicians, but pursuing the ordinary activities which must always absorb the energies of the greater part of the population—gaining their livelihood, amusing themselves, making love, even under the shadow of the guillotine. The hero of the story—a young Jacobin who sends people in droves to the scaffold under the Terror—is the most original of all France's studies of human psychology, for he is the least like the author. Évariste Gamelin is an idealist, and after his fashion a puritan; he is an affectionate son, a kind-hearted neighbour, incapable of desire apart from a deep love; but he comes to sacrifice to the cause of Robespierre his dearest friends, his sister's lover, the benefactress who had obtained for him his appointment as judge, and scores of other innocent people. A painter by profession, he loses all capacity for pursuing his art; he is a horror to his beloved mistress and to himself; and yet when his turn comes to perish by the guillotine to which he has condemned so many others, he reproaches himself not for his ferocity but for the lack of it. Contrasted with this stern adherent to the principles of truth and justice, we have the easy-going Epicurean Brotteaux, who before the Revolution had enjoyed every luxury, but now owns nothing but a pocket copy of Lucretius, and makes jumping-jacks for a living. Atheist and hedonist, without faith in any system of government or philosophy, without respect for human nature, he accepts cheerfully the bitterest privations, and shares the poverty of his garret with a Barnabite brother and a little street girl who are fleeing from republican persecution. Endowed not merely with Anatole France's own point of view but with his intellectual sublety, brilliant wit and personal charm, Brotteaux ends most sympathetically and attractively the gallery of portraits of the author so admirably begun with Sylvestre Bonnard.

Although Brotteaux and his maker are professed admirers of the other sex, the women of this novel are treated with scant sympathy. The inconstant and sensual Élodie, the passionate Julie, the flighty Madame Rochemaure are victims in turn of the author's malice; even the charming actress, Rose Thévenin, gives only a passing thought to Brotteaux after his death, although she loved him, and a timely word of self-forgetfulness on his part had saved her from the guillotine. It is no doubt an intentional perversity on the author's part to make his most attractive and heroic female figure of the little Athenaïs, who has neither morals nor manners.

'La Révolte des Anges,' Anatole France's last considerable work, hardly calls for serious discussion. It is a continuation of the Miltonic legend, transported to modern fashionable life and invested with unnecessary lubricity and ingenious irreverence. In the end, Satan decides that it is not worth while to supplant the King of Heaven; it would make so little difference on the earth, and he really prefers to remain in Opposition.

Anatole France succeeded by right of descent to the empire exerted over the previous generation by Taine and Renan. He was the most distinguished literary figure of his generation, not only in his own country, but in the world, and in a style carried to the highest perfection he expressed the ideas of that generation carried to their logical extreme. It proved a blind alley, and the next generation, while acknowledging his supreme mastery of language as a means of expression and his intellectual eminence, rejected his views as containing nothing to satisfy the spirit of youth, ever ill-content with a gospel of negation and distrust. His criticism of life was indeed so entirely destructive that it left nothing to build on. No institution, human or divine, remained standing, no hope, in nature or in human nature, survived. A reaction from such a counsel of despair was inevitable, and that the reaction should be violent was a natural and wholesome sign of youthful energy. But the lapse of time—and of a long time—is necessary before Anatole France's ideas can take their fair place in the history of thought. To condemn them now is easy; to approve them is to be old-fashioned, which is bad enough, and to be out of touch with the constructive spirit of the age, which is worse.

As an artist, Anatole France has taken a place in French literature which he can hardly lose. His style has the perfection of simplicity, which is the hardest to attain and the most lasting, because it is the least dependent on literary fashions. His love of beauty and of lucidity found a medium of expression free from peculiarities and yet absolutely characteristic of his genius. He was never tired of insisting on the importance of form, and his practice justified his theory; but few writers give the impression of so keen and active a mind at play rather than at work beneath the smoothly flowing and delicately finished lines. In form and thought there is not the slightest appearance of effort, and yet the reader is kept constantly on the alert by some happy turn of phrase which throws the subject into an unexpected and often ludicrous light. The master of the spirits who deny, he has a wit of diabolical subtlety and brilliance which spares nothing the human heart and mind have ever held sacred.

Even artistically he was not constructive in any large sense. It was difficult for him to make a living character which was not a replica of himself or a certain side of himself; and he had still greater difficulty in constructing a plot. He would probably not have written novels at all if the novel had not been the characteristic mode of expression of his time; posterity will find some of his novels hard going on account of obscure contemporary allusions and others overladen with historical matter which the Great War has pushed further back into the limbo of the past. His shorter, simpler stories and essays—especially his charming sketches of his own childhood—have the best chance of survival; his more ambitious efforts will perhaps be read only by students anxious to make themselves familiar with the doubts and fears of a great critical age. In any case his name will take its place by the side of those of Montaigne and Voltaire as a landmark in the history of thought, and even those who condemn his sceptical attitude towards all human affairs will acknowledge his literary eminence. Readers who are old enough to remember the intellectual stimulus and artistic delight afforded by a succession of masterpieces extending over thirty years may deem themselves fortunate to have lived in a time graced by so keen a mind, combining a delicate sense of beauty with an unsurpassed power of expression.

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TRANSLATIONS

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CHAPTER VII

PAUL BOURGET (1852-)

Bourget's origin and early history are clearly set forth in his own writings and those of his biographers, notably Victor Giraud. The Bourget family came from Central France, Paul's father was a professor of mathematics, his grandfather a civil engineer, his great grandfather a farmer. As his father moved from place to place in the course of academic promotion in the Government service, he grew up under different and sometimes discordant influences. Born at Amiens, he had his elementary education at Strasbourg, went to high school at Clermont in Auvergne, and to college in Paris, if we may use American phraseology.

In his early manhood Bourget suffered from an excess unusual to Anglo-Saxon youth of the present day—excessive study. For ten years after taking his master's degree, impecunious and unknown, he frequented Parisian literary circles, wrote a great deal of poetry and some newspaper articles without finding his way. It was not until he was over thirty that he gained public attention by bringing his profound studies of contemporary literature to a point in the 'Essais' and 'Nouveaux Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine.' Taking, to begin with, five authors whom he knew particularly well—Baudelaire, Renan, Flaubert, Taine and Stendhal—

Bourget wrote a brilliant psychological exposition of their minds and temperaments. These studies, which he calls "a few notes made to help the historian of the inner life of France during the latter half of the nineteenth century," stand, as criticism, between Brunetière's formal structure and Lemaître's appreciations. They show maturity of judgment, keen feeling for the lightest shades of expression, and profound psychological and philosophical appreciation; the author's position as a critic of the highest order was firmly established, and this impression was confirmed by the studies in the second volume of the 'Essays' and in 'Études et Portraits.' It was the psychologist again who made his power felt in his travel books, 'Sensations d'Oxford,' 'Sensations d'Italie' and 'Outre-mer.' In this last, especially interesting to Americans as a study of the United States, which he visited in 1893, Bourget shows remarkable receptivity to new feelings and new ideas, though the book is often inaccurate and fundamentally incomplete in that is ignores the great middle class which was at the time the decisive element in American civilisation.

Bourget wrote several dramas. In him the dramatist cannot be separated from the novelist, for his two most important attempts, 'La Barricade' and 'Le Tribun,' occupy a very distinct and essential place in his psychological history of his time. They offer good food for the mind and are interesting to read, but they are not particularly impressive on the stage. Bourget has also been an extremely prolific short-story writer, for, beside his twenty-two volumes of novels, he has published to date no less than eighteen volumes of short stories. Some of the longest are intentionally shortened novels; others are studies of a special type of man or woman; many are descriptions of what a physician would call "a case." For intensity of life or visualising power of description they do not compare with Maupassant's work. But as psychological studies they have few equals and they are indispensable links in the development of Bourget's ideas. His fame, however, rests upon his achievements in the novel, in which, as in his essays, his power of psychological analysis found sufficient scope. His transition from the psychological essay to the psychological novel was deliberate and cannot be better described than in his own words:—

> "These two volumes (of the Essays) were better accepted by the public than I had hoped. My friends, among others Taine, whose opinion I prized so highly, advised me to continue them. They did not understand that the purely personal point of view I had adopted in writing these sketches gave them all their value and that I could not use the same method in dealing with authors less intimately connected with my intellectual development. My common sense inclined me to listen to their advice, for I had seen for the first time my long years of labour recompensed by some success. On the other hand, an instinct I could not overcome urged me toward other fields. What had interested me in these series of essays was not the writers themselves, but the 'états de l'âme' manifested by these writers. Now these states of the soul, what were they but the states of some particular souls? Just as I had perceived beyond the books living sentiments, underneath these sentiments I perceived living souls, and the novel appeared to me as the form of art most suitable to depict them. What sort of novel? At the time I am speaking of . . . the school of novelists descended from Balzac through Flaubert had, in France, discarded almost entirely, from that special genre, the study of inner phenomena. And it was precisely the description of such phenomena that attracted me. There was perhaps some boldness in attempting to re-establish the tradition of the analytic novel in the midst of the complete triumph of the novel of

manners and at a period in which the masters of this school were showing matchless superiority of talent. It was in May, 1883, in a small room at Oxford, a few steps from the old Worcester College haunted by Thomas de Quincey's ghost, that I began my first novel, 'L'Irréparable,' with the very pen with which I had just terminated the preface of the 'Essays.'"

'L'Irréparable' is a long story rather than a novel, but it was a remarkable study in feminine psychology, such as gave distinction to 'Cruelle Énigme' and 'Un Crime d'Amour,' which followed and established the author's reputation as the painter of love in fashionable society. In 'André Cornélis,' the love interest is subordinate, but Bourget came back to his characteristic treatment of his favourite theme in 'Mensonges.' A Parisian woman, handsome and attractive, has a husband, who blindly believes in her, and an elderly lover, a highly interesting type of modern roué, who discreetly provides for the luxury which is the indispensable background of her beauty. She makes the acquaintance of a young poet as naive and innocent as she is wordly-wise. He falls in love with her, and, after a clever comedy of resistance and remorse, she becomes his mistress. For a while, she succeeds in blinding him altogether and in keeping from him the shame of her life, but finally he discovers the truth; his love is stronger than his disgust and jealousy, and he asks her to give up her luxury, her gullible husband and her profitable lover, and to share his poverty and his dreams. She refuses, and the story ends with his attempted suicide and the indirect suggestion that possibly the solution of the moral ills of contemporary society is to be found in the Crucifix.

Hitherto Bourget had contented himself with analysing the passionate sufferings of his heroes and heroines without indicating a remedy. 'Le Disciple' has been generally regarded as marking the change in the author's point of view from that of the detached psychologist to that of the convinced moralist. Bourget himself regarded this transition as a natural and inevitable development; but there is no doubt that the publication of 'Le Disciple' in 1889 marks an important date in the intellectual and moral history of France. The violent polemics that were exchanged about this novel, notably between Ferdinand Brunetière and Anatole France, proved how deeply the public conscience was aroused, and many young Frenchmen of the time were profoundly influenced by the discussion. To stir the souls of men as violently as this, a book must correspond to certain particular conditions of the time, must offer a solution to problems brewing in the brains of many. A sensational crime, "L'Affaire Chambige," probably furnished Bourget with some details of the plot, which is simple to the point of bareness. The materialist philosopher Adrian Sixte, a despiser of spiritual theories, is the master and the inspirer of a young intellectual, Robert Greslou. The young man, who seems to have lost all ethical sense, decides to practise what he calls a psychological experiment on the daughter of the family by which he is employed as a tutor. Personally and sexually, he is attracted by the girl, and, on the other hand, he is evidently a mental pervert. He succeeds in winning her love, but when she discovers that she has been the victim of such a heartless plot, she commits suicide by swallowing poison. Greslou is tried for murder. He sends, then, to Adrian Sixte a detailed history of his life, which shows clearly the deplorable influence of the philosopher's doctrines upon his "disciple." Sixte is appalled, and contemplates intervening at the trial to prove that Greslou is not guilty of actual crime, but the brother of the victim, who knows the facts, after a tremendous mental struggle, tells the truth in court, and then, taking justice into his own hands, shoots Greslou.

"Art for art's sake" had been repeated till it had become a commonplace. The intellectual leaders of the previous generation had left the old paths without finding any outlet—their new ways seemed to lead nowhere. Taine's stoicism, Renan's epicureanism, Anatole France's scepticism had a disintegrating effect on the faith of the new generation, and the time was ripe for a reaction. Taine wrote to Bourget:—"Tastes have changed, my generation is past . . . perhaps the road you are entering, your idea of the unknowable, of a beyond, of a noumenon, will lead you toward a mystic haven, toward some form of Christianity."

The change in Bourget's attitude as revealed in his work was, however, very gradual. In the novels which immediately followed 'Le Disciple' he continued to study the problems offered by the society of his time with the same apparent detachment as before. In 'Cosmopolis' (1893) a change of view is noticeable, and we find in a modified form the same note as in 'Le Disciple'—the moralist gaining the upper hand over the observer. The new point of view becomes progressively clearer until we reach the series of what might be called Bourget's social novels, 'L'Étape,' 'Un Divorce,' and 'L'Émigré,' supplemented by two plays, 'La Barricade' and 'Le Tribun,' which are conceived in the same spirit.

In 'L'Étape' Bourget, always concerned about the family as an institution, shows the danger it runs through a sudden change of social condition and standing. Jean Monneron, son of a poor peasant, has become through tireless energy and broad intelligence a professor. Without transition he has passed from the working class into the bourgeoisie. His family had no time to adjust itself to a new life for which no traditions, no heredity had prepared it. The eldest son commits forgery in order to satisfy his craving for pleasure; the daughter strays from the right path, and, abandoned by her lover, shoots him; the second son would be the consolation of the father but for the former's love for the daughter of the Catholic philosopher Ferrand, a man who holds ideas abhorrent to the free-thinker and Jacobin Monneron. But Ferrand is a generous opponent and Monneron thoroughly honest; the happiness of their children is paramount to them both and there lies the cruellest part of the tragedy. The favourite son abandons the ideas so dear to his father, who realises that in spite of apparent success his life is a dismal failure.

'Un Divorce' is a plea against divorce. A woman of religious tendencies, after a life of misery with an alcoholic husband, divorces him and remarries a man she loves, who is worthy of her affection but is an unbeliever. Her son by the first marriage falls in love with a girl, a fellow student, who professes the most advanced ideas. Although honest at heart she has lived in free union with a scoundrel who has abandoned her with a son whom she is bringing up by her own efforts. The stepfather objects violently to what he considers a dishonourable union. "When you married my mother," answers the son, "she had me, and my father was alive.

The intervention of a priest is for you without value; so is for me the intervention of a magistrate. All the morality of such an act lies in its motives; I see no difference between my marriage and yours." The result is a permanent estrangement. The first husband dies. The wife believes that there is a possibility of regularising a state of things wholly contrary to her religious beliefs; but the second husband refuses a church marriage as being the condemnation of their former life. They live side by side wretched and miserable; their son is gone, their family is broken.

'L'Émigré' is a glorification of the principle of heredity considered as a fundamental basis of the family. In this book Bourget studies that rapidly dying out species, the "grand seigneur," and explains his prejudices, his enforced idleness, the reasons of his former strength and of his present weakness.

In the 'Tribun' (played at the Vaudeville, 1911) the thesis is again the superiority of the family to the individual considered as a unit. Portal, nicknamed "Le Tribun" for his marvellous eloquence, holds radical opinions, but when the hour of trial comes, when he has to choose between his son and his theories, his fatherly love proves stronger, and, converted to ideas he has up to then considered dangerous, he abandons his political career.

'La Barricade,' the preface of which is particularly enlightening as to Bourget's principles, is a study of conflict between capital and labour. It is an exception in Bourget's work; the principal personages belong to the working classes, and it must be admitted that their characterisation is excellent.

In all these Bourget expresses more and more emphatically his belief in authority and tradition, in monarchy, aristocracy, and the Catholic Church as institutions necessary for the welfare of France.

The religious side of the question is emphasized in many of his subsequent novels. In 'Le Démon de Midi' the ethical shares with the religious the place of importance. "Le Démon de Midi," "the demon of midday" of the Vulgate, is for the monk, tired by the early prayers, the languor and sadness that overwhelm him at the heavy hour of noon. For the layman who has reached middle life and achieved success it is the feeling of overconfidence and pride that leaves him weak and disarmed before the onslaught of his passions. This is illustrated in the novel by the fate of a man up to then blameless, who yields to a guilty love. He is cruelly punished in his son, whose death is caused by the father's intrigue. The conclusion is that a man must live as he thinks; if he does not, he will soon think as he lives.

'Le Sens de la Mort' (1915) considers the problem of death from the religious point of view. War, as may be easily inferred from the date of publication, has a part in it, but a very small one; there is almost no plot. Its profound interest lies in the analysis of the sentiments evoked by approaching death in the souls of two men, one deeply religious, the other an unbeliever. Ortègue, a great surgeon, a free thinker, married to a woman twenty years his junior, is suffering from cancer; he conceals his pain from everyone, but knows only too well that the end is near. As he is slowly dying, he is haunted by the thought that his wife, whose beauty is every day blooming more radiantly, may after his death love again. A fainting fit at the operating table discloses his true condition. Carried away by her feelings on realising the moral tortures of her husband, the young woman decides that she will not survive him; they will commit suicide together. Then happens the only incident of the novel. Captain le Gallic, a relative of Madame Ortègue, who all his life has silently loved her, is brought mortally wounded to the hospital. He is a man of strong religious convictions, and his attitude in presence of imminent death deeply impresses his cousin. She is afraid of the great beyond. Ortègue, apprised of her feelings, concludes that the pact that she had entered into, out of pity and not out of love, is monstrous and must not be carried out. He reassures her as to his condition and promises that he will fight the disease; when he has succeeded in lulling her fears, he kills himself. When Madame Ortègue hears of the death of her husband, she considers herself guilty and again wishes to die. Captain le Gallic proves to her that she must live for the sake of the soul of her husband as well as of her own. After that, she devotes all her energies to the care of the wounded, and in her heart, unconsciously tormented by religious desire, germinate slowly the ideas sown by the Christian officer on his deathbed.

In all his last novels with the exception of 'L'Écuyère,' a charming picture of the Paris of the early eighties before the days of automobiles, the discussion of religious problems plays an important part. 'Lazarine' shows a woman who is led to transfer her love from a freethinker to a Christian. 'Némésis' is the story of a man who masters his infatuation for an unbelieving woman. In

'Un Drame dans le Monde,' the influence of religious belief transforms the whole life of the hero and heroine.

Bourget has been frequently blamed for having selected his models exclusively among the leisured classes. Sageret points out that out of 391 personages, 187 belong either to the aristocracy or to the high bourgeoisie. Bourget answers as Octave Feuillet did, when reproached for the same exclusiveness:—"I have placed several of these studies among the idlers of high society because I desired to have the most complete 'cases' possible and it is in that class only that people have enough leisure to think over their sentiments; for that reason I have been accused of frivolity, snobbishness or even contempt for the poor."

It cannot be denied that he has sometimes dwelt with admiring enjoyment on the niceties of dress or on the elegance of the interior decoration of a mansion. He is fond of all social refinements, but this does not prove that he is a snob. A critic who went to interview him some days before the first representation of the dramatization of 'L'Émigré' relates that as he (the critic) expressed some surprise at the heat Bourget displayed in defending the ideas of his hero, Marquis de Clavier-Grandchamps, the writer interrupted:—"But for all my admiration I am a bourgeois, a plain bourgeois and proud to be. As Louis Veuillot has said:—'If I had to reorganize my country, I would create an aristocracy and omit my own name from the list!' "

He did not belong by birth or early association to the world he described, but, unlike many other writers, he did not imagine it; he studied it in its most intricate details and painted it true to life. There is seldom a saying of any of his characters which is not exactly what a person belonging to the same class or caste of life would have said under the same circumstances. His idea of absolute truth is so rooted in his mind that he will take any amount of trouble to verify the plausibility of an apparently insignificant detail. It is said that, wishing to describe some phases of a certain disease, he followed for more than four months the clinic of a prominent Parisian specialist; having to mention some of the after-effects of tropical malarial fever, before finishing his chapter he awaited the return of a young military surgeon who had been sent to Central Africa to study that special ailment, and he was satisfied only after having read the results of the investigation and verified his description as being scientifically flawless.

Bourget is often hailed as the initiator of the novel of analysis. He is not, and frequently said so himself. He borrowed his general method from Stendhal, the author of 'La Chartreuse de Parme' and 'Le Rouge et le Noir,' but Taine had a greater influence upon his development; furthermore, although strongly opposed to the theories of the Naturalistic School, he follows the same rules, transposed from the material to the moral plane. He applies biological methods to psychological phenomena with far greater scientific accuracy than Zola ever did in his so-called experimental novels. Everywhere in his stories we find careful explanations of influences which biologically determine the life of a man—heredity, milieu, individual past—but he never disregards the personal element. From this scientific process, from the predominant consideration of the psychological side, it results that his characters exist as minds, as souls, rather than as men and women of flesh and blood. His landscapes even are not visible to us, and they remain in our memories only through the intellectual emotions they have aroused in us, not through sensations caused by shape, colour or smell. His heroes have seldom a material existence in our minds; we do not know them personally by their names as we do Daudet's characters. They represent categories or species; among the men: the sentimental and romantic dreamer, the muscular and somewhat brutal sportsman, the man of letters, the scientist, the business man; among the women: the victim, the tormentor. All represent from different angles types which are admirably characterised psychologically, but they do not stand before our eyes, as clearly outlined as if we had met them in real life.

If Stendhal had an influence on Bourget's literary development, Bonald, Le Play and perhaps Joseph de Maîstre were the determining factors in the orientation of his work as a student of social problems. Taine's sway was in a double direction; the critic of the 'Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise' exercised on Bourget's literary work a considerable influence; the author of 'Les Origines de la France contemporaine,' the historian of the Revolution, affected him also as regards his sociological views but in a lesser degree than the three men mentioned above. Bourget thought that "a writer worthy to hold a pen has, as his first requirement, to be a moralist. The moralist is the man who shows life as it is, with its profound lessons of sin and expiation. To show how vice rankles is to be a moralist." The lessons conveyed by his first novels did not satisfy him; he had to go to the logical conclusion of his tendencies. He loved order, stability and rule; in this new world he saw nothing but disorder, instability, movements of an experimental and dangerous nature. In the traditional faith and ancient forms of government of his country he saw the characteristics that appealed most strongly to his inner self. It is on these convictions that he based his prescriptions to cure the evils he merely depicted at the start as a disinterested witness. He considered his subject from every angle—social, political, religious.

It is for the French to decide whether his opinions are sound or ill-founded. His pleas in favour of a reversion to the old faith, to the traditional form of government would perhaps be more convincing if they were not so passionate. Though one-sided, he is not narrowminded; he understands reasons others may have for holding opinions in contradiction to his own; he esteems them for being consistent; like all intelligent men, he admires intelligence wherever he sees it.

The question of the so-called conversion of Bourget has been frequently discussed; Sageret devotes some hundred pages of 'Les Grands Convertis' to prove that he has passed through a fundamental change; Rivasso a whole book to prove that he has not. On this point no one has a better right to answer than Bourget himself. In his very first verse we find expressions which prove indisputably that if at a certain period of his early life he allowed his religious convictions to grow cool, he never abandoned them. 'Épilogue,' a poem written and published in 1882, ends with an avowal that in all his doubts and difficulties he had always remained a Christian at heart. Later on he answered more fully:—

"I have seen critics, some kindly, others evilly disposed towards me, comparing 'Cruelle Énigme' to 'Cosmopolis,' 'Un Crime d'Amour' to 'Terre Promise,' 'Les Essais de Psychologie' to 'Outre-mer' and pronouncing about me the portentous word of "Conversion." I should not be afraid of the word, for I consider that *the face about* of a mind, which, under the lessons of life, recognises its first error, is one of the noblest spectacles. But such is not my case. One can be converted from a negation, but one is not converted from a purely expectant attitude . . . It would be very easy to me to demonstrate that if there has been a development of my thoughts there has never been contradiction and that the last chapter but one of 'Un Crime d'Amour,' the epilogue of 'Mensonges,' twenty passages of 'La Physiologie,' the last pages of 'Le Disciple,' those about the confession and sin in 'Cruelle Énigme' were closely linked to what I have called since experimental apologetics. These apologetics consist in establishing, according to an expression dear to mathematicians, that being given a series of observations on human life, everything in these observations has happened as if Christianity were the truth. This is the testimony that I bear on the observations which I have been able to make on the sensibility of my time and which have been recorded in these novels, sometimes bold, sometimes morbid, but always sincere."

Bourget's style has nothing of the peerless elegance of Anatole France or of the pictorial quality of Maupassant. It is a solid and heavy instrument of expression which may convince, but cannot charm. It has often been said that the greatest quality a novelist can possess is to be entirely absent from his work. Bourget is always present; it is he who discusses, argues, explains. In his presentation of the case there is something of the lawyer, or even of the preacher. Nevertheless, he shows at times a pathos that grips the heart because he is himself deeply moved. He reacted against some of the tendencies of his contemporaries at the very time when a number of his young countrymen were suffering from an anxiety he had felt before them. They were tired of dilettanteism; they could not stand perpetual irony or doubt any longer; they wanted a creed, an affirmation, some reason for acting and living. All the questions which have troubled our times he has considered unflinchingly; free love, divorce, heredity, modern science, class hatred, cosmopolitanism, religious problems; and after searching analysis he has offered answers. These answers cannot suit everyone; they are too precise, too absolute, but for many they were evidently the solution that "liberated their souls," and this explains at the same time the enthusiastic devotion and the intense dislike he has aroused in opposite sections of French opinion. The disapproval is as great a testimony to his power as the admiration.

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CHAPTER VIII

MAURICE BARRÈS (1862–   )

THE Anglo-Saxon world has generally neglected Barrès as an author and frequently misunderstood him as a thinker; unlike some of his contemporaries, he is held in much higher esteem in his own country than abroad. The fewness of the translations of his work into English and their general inadequacy may be explained by the delicacy of his style, the subtlety of his thought, and the peculiarly French characteristics of both. Yet he was pre-eminently qualified by the extraordinary richness of his sensibility, the keenness of his intelligence, and his artistic skill in self-expression to be the interpreter of the generation which came to its majority in the early and middle eighties. They were far from being a happy generation, the young intellectuals of that epoch. They had been brought up under the shadow of defeat. Their country was divided; they did not know where the truth was to be found, or even whether it was to be found anywhere. Many had discarded their traditional faith; some had accepted the cold teachings of a philosophy mostly German, unsuited to their mental equilibrium; others fell into an indifferent scepticism, or into a dilettanteism alluring but perilous. Barrès, himself a prey to the tendencies of his time, reacted against the excesses of his own theories and helped his generation to recover its intellectual balance. Taine misjudged him: "This young man," said he, "will never do anything worth while, for he is prompted by two tendencies absolutely opposed, a taste for meditation and a desire for action." The older man could not see that the service of the younger was to lie precisely in reconciling this opposition.

Born at Charmes-sur-Moselle of a mother of pure Lorraine race and a father whose remoter family origin may be traced to Auvergne, Barrès united the realism of Callot with the abstract reasoning power of Pascal, to whom he bore a remarkable facial resemblance. His grandfather, a captain in the light infantry of the Guard, was one of the "grognards" of Napoleon I. During the Franco-German war of 1870 the old soldier was taken as a hostage by the invaders and died of maltreatment in some unknown corner of the desolated province. The scenes of slaughter and devastation of which the child was the terrified eye-witness at that time made an indelible impression on his mind. Brought up in a region ruined by a crushing defeat, he grew up in an atmosphere of sadness. He first studied at the Malgrange College in the suburbs of Nancy and later, in the lycée of the same town. A frail and oversensitive child, he suffered from the roughness of his schoolmates, and his independent and inquisitive mind found no consolation in the formal teachings of his masters.

His family wished him to become a magistrate. In 1880 he began to study law, but Flaubert, Montesquieu, d'Aubigné and many other thinkers attracted him a great deal more than the civil or the penal code. He contributed irregularly to 'La Jeune France.' Allenet, the editor, showed some of the young man's manuscripts to Anatole France and Leconte de Lisle, who advised him to come to Paris. His articles not being always accepted, as he thought they should have been, in 1884 he began to publish a review of his own, 'Les Taches d'Encre,' which lasted little more than a year, but helped him to gain admission to the leading dailies and periodicals. In 1886, in collaboration with Charles le Goffic, he started another review, 'Les Chroniques,' which was also shortlived. This time it was to secure not the printing of his own prose but the verse of another, Jules Tellier, the charming Symbolist poet who died too soon to give the real measure of his talent. Late in 1888 his first book, 'Sous l'Œil des Barbares,' was published, and in the early days of 1889 a remarkable article by Paul Bourget in 'Le Journal des Débats' forced it upon the attention of the élite. With 'L'Homme libre' (1889) and 'Le Jardin de Bérénice' (1891) this book forms a trilogy, 'Le Culte du Moi'—the cult of self or the cult of the ego—the philosophy with which his first fame was associated.

To analyse these works is no easy task; there is no plot, there are few incidents, and although the connection between the various parts is, on the whole, logical, the thread is difficult to follow. They are a series of essays on the philosophical doctrine of the author and on his interpretation of life; he called them "metaphysical novels." They are certainly metaphysical enough, and, just as certainly, not novels.

Philip, the hero and practically the only character of the first volume, has finished his studies in a provincial college. In the mind of this twenty-year-old boy, the influences of literary Romanticism and Kantian philosophy are easily discernible; religion, ethics, the sentiment of nationality have been destroyed; and as the teachings of his masters have been powerless to reconstruct a rule of life, he is driven back on the only reality that, in his eyes, indubitably exists; his ego. Self-knowledge, self-culture will be the ultimate end of his life. But disturbing influences hinder him in his studies; he shuts like Vigny the door of his ivory tower against the barbarians of the external world and tries to avoid all contact with them. This proves to be an impossible remedy, for intercourse with others is necessary for his own development. Although he shrinks from the touch of unsympathetic beings, he soon realises that the reaction from contact with others causes new feelings, which he analyses on his return into his inner world: "Pleasure begins only with the melancholy of remembrance . . . to offer any sweetness an act must be transmuted into thought." As the external is only important in so far as it is modified by thought, "it is he himself who creates the universe; he is the universe." On the other hand he has a natural yearning for action; he wants to rule; he wants to serve. His problem is to limit his inner world and adapt it to the external world for the necessities of ordinary life, while reserving for his inner self the universe of his dreams.

The psychological experiments and adventures of Philip are continued in 'L'Homme libre' and 'Le Jardin de Bérénice,' in which the hero develops his ideas not only in Lorraine, but in Italy and Germany. The author was himself enlarging his mind in accordance with his theories by contact with life. In 1888, to put into practice his theories of 'L'Homme libre' and to acquire data for 'Le Jardin de Bérénice' he entered the political arena, and in 1889 was elected deputy for Nancy after a savage fight in which on one occasion at Champenoux he was seriously wounded, his carriage broken to splinters and set on fire by the mob. He was then so youthful in appearance that frequently people thought he was campaigning for his father and were taken aback when he told them he was himself the candidate. He had joined the party of General Boulanger; that a man as clever as Barrès chose such an indifferent leader may cause surprise. The explanation lies in the fact that he was a Lorrainer; he had never given up the hope of seeing his native province restored to its former allegiance; Boulanger embodied for him the spirit of Revenge. Beaten in 1893, Barrès did not abandon his political activities; he kept on fostering by all means in his power the ideas of nationalism and regionalism developed in the novels of this period. Elected deputy for Paris in 1906, he has since always been re-elected. In political circles he enjoys a great deal more influence than could be inferred from his opinions; this is due to his prestige as a writer and a thinker, to a proverbial coolness under fire, and a dangerous gift for biting repartee. His speeches at the Chamber of Deputies and in political meetings have gained for him a well deserved reputation as a debater, and since the death of Count de Mun, he is, with perhaps one exception, the greatest literary orator in Parliament.

Having decided that the proper place of the Ego was in the world of men, Barrès was led to study sociological conditions. As the ego is paramount, not a single individual must be oppressed even for the sake of the community. With this truism as a starting point, André

Malterre, the hero of 'L'Ennemi des Lois,' examines how society can be organized. It goes without saying that he is an anarchist, from every point of view, political, moral and intellectual. Two women play a part in the book. Claire is all mind and has "a passion for professors"; Marina, a Russian princess, artless and sensual, is quite the reverse. Malterre is at first the lover of Marina, later on, the husband of Claire, and finally they compromise by living all three together—quite an immoral solution had not the writer from the beginning explained that it was merely an allegory. With Claire, who represents the intellectual side of human nature, Malterre visits Germany and analyses the effect of German socialism on German sensibility. For an intellectual like Barrès it was a shock to realise that economic revolution was their only aim; that their socialism appealed exclusively "to the belly." "Give us something that will change the heart of men," exclaims André; "it is a state of mind and not laws that the world demands—a moral and not a material reform."

The 'Roman de l'Énergie nationale' is composed of three novels or rather three volumes, the first, 'Les Déracinés' being the only one that can be accurately called a novel. It is of special interest because of its presentation of the new doctrine of "regionalism." The 'Déracinés' are seven young Lorrainers of different temperament and station in life but brought up under the same influences. Having studied the system of Kant with Professor Bouteiller (whose characteristics are strangely similar to those of the late professor and politician Burdeau), they have retained as a result of his teaching only the power of destructive criticism; he has given them "no support either in their race or in their land." Bouteiller is the type of the educator who has political ambitions and attempts to apply to public life the dry theories of the classroom. His seven pupils go to Paris, and, severed from all former connections, fall an easy prey to circumstances and their own passions. Of these young men Sturel and two others have means and represent the leisured and intellectual middle class and the conservative country families; of the rest, Suret-Lefort is the climbing and unscrupulous newspaper man, Mouchefrin and Racadot two penniless but ambitious youths, who might have been worthy citizens had they remained in their native province surrounded and supported by old friends and associations. Blinded by the intense life of Paris, they launch a newspaper, which they have neither the capital, the character, nor the ability to sustain; they are driven to the wall and in order to extricate themselves, resort to robbery and murder. Racadot is executed, and Mouchefrin, his accomplice, escapes through the weakness of Sturel, who, though he has knowledge of inculpating facts, keeps silent. The episodes are too numerous to be related in detail, but the book has an extremely diversified and keen psychology and deep moral and social meaning; its lesson is that of faithfulness to one's native soil.

The two later volumes, 'L'Appel au Soldat' and 'Leurs Figures' are dramatized history. They relate respectively to the Boulanger affair and the Panama scandal. They are eloquent arraignments of parliamentary institutions.

At this point Barrès seems to have definitely renounced his egotism. In his view, if a race wants to survive, it must above all consider itself as the heir of the dead buried in its soil and must cherish all the customs accumulated through centuries. Every man who wants to reach his highest development must remain attached to his "petite patrie," his province, the land of his ancestors. Such a theory is of limited interest to Americans, but it must not be forgotten that the doctrine of "regionalism," developed in 'Les Déracinés' and subsequent novels, has had considerable influence on French politics and literature.

In 'Au Service de L'Allemagne' and in 'Colette Baudoche,' which forms with 'Les Amitiés Françaises' the trilogy called 'Les Bastions de l'Est,' Barrès considers the Alsatian problem as it presented itself before the Great War—in the first book, from the point of view of the young man compelled to serve in the armies of the conqueror, in the second, from that of the young girl who has remained the faithful guardian of the home of her ancestors. She makes the acquaintance of a young German, and is attracted by certain sides of his nature and at the same time repelled by others. Although the book appears at first to be merely a novel with a love plot, it is in reality a comparison between French and German culture, an explanation of the deep-seated causes of a century-old antagonism.

In several other volumes such as 'Le Voyage de Sparte' or 'Greco, ou le Secret de Tolède,' Barrès continues to explain his æsthetic theories and, at the same time, the principle of his nationalism. 'La Colline inspirée' is the story, more or less dramatized, of an incident which took place in Lorraine at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the brothers Baillard attempted to organize a new religion. In this book we find pages of the most beautiful lyric eloquence, such as the famous dialogue between the meadow-land and the Church:—

> In this vast mingling of scattered stone-heaps, of sparse grassy growths, of thicket and brushwood swept by the strong wind—a fantastically woven carpet across which centuries of dream-fancies have danced their way—there is one noteworthy corner where the spirit has set its sign. One sees a small building on this height, four stone walls at a rise of the hill. The ceaseless wind that sweeps from Vaudemont to Sion throws voices from the rolling meadow-lands against these well-built walls and carries back a message to the waste lands where it spends its fury.
>
> "I am," says the meadow-land, "the spirit of earth and of the stocks that spring from earth; I am liberty; I am inspiration."
>
> And the cloister answers: "I am established principle. I am authority, the bond with the past; I am an accepted code of human thought; I am the stronghold of man's soul."
>
> But the meadow-land speaks again, saying: "I shall trouble that soul of yours. Those who breathe my air are questioning spirits. That he may rest and contemplate, the tiller of the soil comes up to me from his furrowed fields. An instinct draws him to me. I am his first resort; I am an everlasting well-spring."
>
> And, again, the cloister speaks that we may hear; "Ye who tarry in the meadow-land, come to me with your dreams that I may cleanse them from worldly dross, bring me your strong enthusiasms that I may direct them aright. Mine is the guidance that you want; it is I whom you seek instinctively, while I am still unknown to you. What troubles your spirit? The longing for my quiet repose. I am the meadow-land grown upward toward Heaven, though that meadow-land know me not as part of itself. I am the outgrowth of a dream toward higher things. Whoever you may be, it cannot be that you need no help from me. I shall set you in harmony with life. You claim a personal liberty. But could I not direct that liberty to more satisfactory ends? We are fellow products, you and I, of generations past and gone.

You are one incarnation of our forefathers' spirit; I am another manifestation of that same spirit. I am enduring stone, the accepted wisdom of the ages, the treasure-house of humanity, the cradle of your early years, the dwelling-place of your forbears. I am fitted for your innermost intimate needs, even for those impulses that you have but do not know; and, within my walls, you will find for your life's every contingency the mystic word made manifest for you before you came into being. Come to me —if you would find the footing that cannot fail, a retreat where you can pass your days in calm security, a shelter on whose walls you may write your own epitaph."

So the two forces argue on for ever. And which shall one obey? Must one be chosen and the other left? Why not, rather, let these two opposing principles struggle continually, with never a victory for one or the other, only a strengthening of each by dint of the combat? Neither could do without the other. Can enthusiasm be fruitful if it remain only in the mind of one man? Can order be an excellent thing if it is not inspired? The Church is a product of the life of the meadow-land; the Church ever draws its new strength from that life—in order that it may save us from that life.

'La Grande Pitié des Églises de France' is one of the most peculiar of the many peculiar books published by Barrès. After the separation of Church and State in France, confessional associations had been charged with the upkeep of religious edifices; the Catholic Church having rejected the principle of these associations as contrary to canonical rules, there was practically no one responsible for its ecclesiastical buildings; this state of affairs permitted the desecration of some monuments and the destruction of others. Although an agnostic, Barrès is a poet and an artist and as such could not remain indifferent. As a deputy of Paris, he made in the Chamber on this subject several speeches which were among the most beautiful flights of oratory ever heard in the Palais Bourbon. Even his adversaries were struck by the magnificence and the classical beauty of his style. Paul Souday, whose impartiality could not be suspected in such a case, selected the following example:—

> "This beautiful steeple, which is the most ancient and the most striking expression of divinity in our race; that darkened nave, in which one realises a consciousness of a long previous life as well as of an eternal life; this table of stone, on which rest the great principles which are the moral life of our history—nothing of this persuades you, nothing keeps you from ruining this house, which through its door, wide open at every hour of the day, creates in the middle of the village a communication with divinity and mixes it with our daily lives. . . .
>
> "There are not in this land of France two churches which are in every way alike, any more than there are two leaves which are identical in a vast forest. Romanesque churches, Gothic churches, churches of the French Renaissance, churches in the barroque style—all bear a magnificent testimony, the most powerful, the broadest of testimony in favour of French genius. . . . They are the song of our land, the voice of the soil on which they rest, the voice of the time when they were built, the voice of the people who willed them."

During the War, Barrès undertook to maintain the morale of the people at the rear and nearly every day published an article in 'L'Écho de Paris.' These articles, gathered in book form, make some ten volumes of rather unequal worth, but representing a most moving history of the great conflict. One of them, 'Les diverses Familles spirituelles de la France,' deserves special mention. The spiritual element was the dominating force in the War and Barrès attempted to prove it by making use of correspondence and documents of every sort which were put at his disposal. They come from Roman Catholics, Protestants, Traditionalists, Socialists, Jews, and they all give the same impression, that these men, whatever were their creeds, fought for the same ideals. Truly, the book is not that of Barrès; a whole generation has written it. The glorious artist, the member of the French Academy, the great egotist in literature, considered it an honour to act as the respectful interpreter for these unknown heroes.

This production (and we have omitted a number of titles) is far from representing the whole of the work of Barrès, for he is also one of the most prolific journalists of France. He has contributed regularly and often to numerous reviews and newspapers. This literary activity would have been more than sufficient to fill the life of any man; it was not so for Barrès, who, beside all this, has had a most strenuous political career.

Barrès, remarks René Gillouin in his psychological study, possesses to a high degree the characteristics of three different types which in life are generally met in distinct individuals—the moralist, the artist, and the man of action. It took him time to work out the problems of the relation of inner life to external life, of thought to action. The sensibility of the artist is at the opposite pole to moral sensibility, except perhaps in the highest plane; the former is purely subjective, the latter objective. It cannot be disputed that Barrès felt exclusively the first at the beginning of his career. We read in the meditation on Philippe l'Arabe, the child emperor, that he cried at the thought that the beauty of the court dancers was perishable, but remained unmoved on hearing they had been smothered in the flames of a conflagration. "He had cried at the thought they were mortal, but did not cry because they had perished." Similarly in the 'Death of Venice': "I pity Venice in seeing in what condition centuries have left it, but I do not wish that my wail should restore it." On the other hand we could show the moral sensibility of Barrès by a thousand quotations. He pities and loves his fellowmen. This leads him to dream of a society where the laws of heart and nature would take the place of the hard laws of the legists.

We are able to distinguish, approximately after the publication of 'L'Ennemi des Lois,' three different and opposed currents in his thoughts: (1) egotism and æsthetic sensibility; (2) moral sensibility, love for his fellowmen, and a kind of tender anarchism; (3) political activity and Nationalism. The Egotist who, at first, when a new light appears on the horizon of thought, runs to it and investigates, soon realises that this dispersion is not only vain, but dangerous. "The best dialectic, the most complete demonstration cannot satisfy me. My heart has to be filled with great respect accompanied with love. It is in these moments of deep feeling that my heart tells me what I cannot allow to be disputed." The Ego retires within itself and digs until it has reached the spring of those unconscious feelings, which is for him French and most particularly Lorraine tradition.

But man has not only to deal with society, with life; he has also to face death. Barrès has discarded all Christian faith, but has still a thirst for what lasts for ever. Death is near, that thought haunts him. Tradition is again his ultimate resource. Being unable to imagine his ego as created for eternity by a nominative decree of the Lord, he conceives it as a particle of something immortal that develops itself through an infinity of different bodies: the race.

Henceforth all contradictions disappear: æsthetic and moral sensibilities and desire for action have found a common object and goal.

Such a conception of life will be rejected by those who consider the soul as a physical manifestation; by Christians or the champions of the Categorical Imperative; by those in whom all deep sentiments are abolished. But it will be accepted and considered beneficent and helpful by those for whom the mind is a partial expression of the soul; those in whom religious sentiment still exists, though faith is lost; those in whom the voice of tradition has not been smothered. And we must not forget that the majority of the French are rural, fixed on the land, and strongly organized in families.

From an ethical point of view, men may be divided into two categories: some accept without discussion the principles that society, family, teachers impress on them; others reject these altogether, and attempt to build for themselves the very foundations. Judging superficially from the theories of Barrès, one would be inclined to place him among the first, but he distinctly belongs to the second; he reverted to tradition through an indirect and very devious process of deduction. The question of the conversion of Barrès is a frequent topic of debate among French intellectuals. A republican and a sceptic he was and still is; conversion is a misleading word in his case—evolution would be more accurate. To what ultimate conclusion this evolution will lead him no one can foresee; but the influence of Barrès over the young men of his own and the following generation cannot be doubted; as one of the most brilliant of them, Jean de Tinan, said shortly before his untimely death, "Barrès has been our educator, our professor of energy, . . . for that, we can never be thankful enough."

As an artist Barrès was at first a Romantic; but his Romanticism was purified from all its inferior characteristics, excessive imagery, doubtful grammar, inaccurate language. He is now a classic by the preponderance of the inner life, concentration of thought, clearness of expression, impeccable syntax. He has contributed more than anyone else to the reversion to traditional forms of style, and at the same time he has assimilated all that there was of real worth and likely to live in impressionism. This tendency toward classicism is more and more noticeable in his work; he himself has said in the 'Voyage de Sparte,' "I was mistaken in my manner of interpreting what I admired; I was striving for a certain effect and turned things about until I had obtained it. Now I meet life in a more familiar way; I wish to see it with eyes as simple as the eyes of the ancient Greeks." Formerly the most subjective of artists, he tends now to an ever-increasing objectivity.

Barrès has been more or less misunderstood by Anglo-Saxons, particularly by Americans. His reasons are based too much on general and abstract principles to satisfy practical minds. His nationalism appears narrow in comparison with the new theories of broad internationalism. His doctrine, founded on deep-seated tradition, naturally makes little appeal in a country whose inhabitants belong to almost all the races on earth. He cannot be for them a teacher as he has been for the youth of France; but they may be able to admire in him a curious thinker and a master of style—one of the best prose poets of the time.

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CHAPTER IX

CHARLES MAURRAS (1868–)

THE recent candidature of Charles Maurras for the vacancy in the French Academy caused by the death of Paul Deschanel provoked a lively discussion, both from the political and the literary point of view, not only in France, but in the other Latin countries of Europe, but hardly a ripple from this controversial storm reached the other side of the Atlantic. In the United States the name of Charles Maurras is almost unknown, and what he stands for is even less understood. Yet in France he is universally acclaimed as a writer of prose, and even among those who do not agree with his conclusions, the value of his criticism of current political ideas is freely acknowledged. Maurice Privat in 'Vive la République' differs from Maurras completely as a politician, but sees in him a convincing student of the philosophy of history, a keen scholarly critic and a wholly admirable writer. Many others have thought it worth while to devote important articles, even books, to the study of his theories; it is with the help of these writings, particularly those of Gonzague Truc, Albert Thibaudet and, above all, Achille Ségard that we shall be able to present the French point of view, which needs all the more careful exposition because the ideas and influence of Maurras are unfamiliar to the Anglo-Saxon world.

Charles Maurras was born on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea at Martigues, a charming little seaport famous among artists for its multi-coloured houses, which under the flaming sun of Provence cast gorgeous splashes of colour on the lagoon of Port-de-Bouc. From both sides he is a Gallo-Latin, for his mother's family came from Avignon. His forbears belonged to the middle class and were sailors, lawyers or judges. Many of them toward the end of the monarchy were collectors of taxes, and their descendants, at the beginning of the Republic, occupied similar positions. Maurras studied at the Catholic College of Aix-en-Provence, the seignorial city of the south, and one of the most picturesque of France. But the sedate old town could not satisfy so intensely active a mind, and he left for Paris as soon as he got his baccalaureate degree. At twenty-three he had already found his way, and begun to write about his two principal interests: politics and literature.

In the Latin Quarter, Maurras remained a passionate admirer of belles-lettres. Unable to follow any oral instruction on account of his deficient hearing, he lived alone, improving, by private study, his knowledge of ancient literatures. He learned English, and acquired Italian in order to read Dante in the original. In French literature his interest was centred on the period which is most intensely saturated with Greek or Latin influence; he knew all the poets of 'La Pléiade,' particularly Ronsard. In his study of that epoch, he made use of St. Beuve's 'Tableau historique et critique de la Poésie française et du Théâtre français au seizième Siècle,' and underwent the influence of that great critic, which was felt most intensely in his future work. A study of theology and the reading of St. Thomas Aquinas led him to Auguste Comte.

An article he published in 'L'Observateur Français' was the starting point of a friendship with Barrès which had important results. Le Goffic happened to read the article in his mother's little book-shop at Lannion and sent it to Jules Tellier, who in turn communicated it to Barrès. When the latter became the chief editor of 'La Cocarde,' he invited Maurras to join him, and for six months Maurras wrote in it every other day a contribution under the heading 'La Vie Intellectuelle.' At the same time he wrote articles headed 'La Vie Littéraire' for 'La Revue Encyclopédique Larousse,' and he later joined the staff of 'La Gazette de France.'

Very few of these notable articles up to the present have been gathered in permanent form: an article on Verlaine (1895), one on Brunetière (1899), and another on Barrès (1903) have been published by Henri Clouard in 'Maurras et la Critique des Lettres.' The four articles on René Vivien, Madame de Régnier, Madame Lucie Delarue-Mardrus and Madame la Comtesse de Noailles appeared under the general title of 'Feminine Romanticism' in 'L'Avenir de l'Intelligence.' The studies on Moréas (1891) and of Sand and Musset (1902) are available as separate volumes, and the three articles on Chateaubriand, Michelet, and Sainte-Beuve were published in 'Trois Idées politiques' (1898). All the rest is scattered in newspapers and reviews, mostly in 'La Gazette de France.'

The criticism of Maurras is characterized by a keen and cold intelligence. He always tries to determine the reaction of the work he is considering on other work of the same kind, and the effect it may have on the general development of French literature. In these processes the social, the political and the literary points of view are closely welded. He never considers the author by himself, separated either from the past or from the future of French civilisation. His standard is high—that of the great classics,—and his judgments are severe, but he is always sympathetic and friendly, and more inclined to discover qualities than to look out for faults. One of his principles is to refuse to make any distinction between the beauty of the style in itself and the quality of the thought expressed. The unavoidable result of such a method is that he is a better judge of prose-writers than of poets, and certain modern authors have fared badly at his hands. His method, which he has himself called 'Empirisme organisateur,' has given excellent results. It consists in the determination of the ultimate tendencies of the ideas, sentiments, or peculiarities of style in the works studied; of what would be the final result of these tendencies, if continued and amplified in the same direction. The answer to these questions is based on analogies in the past, and on comparison with the movements which in the history of literature have produced masterpieces or come to nothing. He has discovered writers and books little known or misjudged and given them the rank that is really theirs. He has explained to his contemporaries the true reasons for admiring Renan, Proudhon, Sainte-Beuve, Le Play and Joseph de Maistre. The reputation of Fustel de Coulanges is his work. On the other hand, in his analyses of Michelet, Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand, he has shown clearly that their real qualities had blinded their admirers to many serious faults; going back to Rousseau, he incorporated the discussion of social ideas in his literary criticism and built up a doctrine supported by the authority of other masters—a doctrine of reaction against the disorder of ideas he regarded as typically romantic. He began his campaign against romanticism in 1895 in 'La Cocarde.' His little book 'Les Amants de Venise' (1902) showed in an indirect but particularly caustic fashion the deplorable literary effects of exaggerated egotism.

His criticism is not merely destructive. If he blames Rousseau, he extols Voltaire; he uses the faults of Michelet as a foil to the accuracy of Fustel de Coulanges; he makes fun of Georges Sand and praises Anatole France, and when he sacrifices Brunetière, it is for the benefit of Sainte-Beuve. Even his inordinate love for the 'École Romane' may be explained by his desire for glorifying Racine and Ronsard through Moréas and other contemporary poets.

The critical method of Maurras may be summed up thus: to understand, estimate and classify ideas, to compare them, to make a selection, to separate those which are lasting from those which are ephemeral, to determine the reason of their permanence or of their failure, to reduce the variety of literary production, political proposals and individual conceptions to a few stable principles; by this means he sought to put some order into the minds of men and thus to contribute to the classical renaissance he desired so intensely.

'Anthinea' appeared in 'La Gazette de France' about 1901. It is an account of trips taken by the author to Greece, Italy and Corsica. The first took place in

1896 on the occasion of the Olympic Games, and the book was dedicated to Gustave Janicot, Director of 'La Gazette de France,' who had sent the author to Athens. It is probably the only book by Maurras in which we discern some romantic influence. In spite of his eminently logical mind, he has the sensibility of an artist, and nowhere in the world can be found a more romantic setting than the vicinity of Athens. When he tells us that on his first visit to the Acropolis he kissed the first column of the Propylæa, we are moved rather than amused, for as Gonzague Truc explains, Maurras is a Greek, a Greek of the great epoch, returned in our time through the fancies of destiny. But we know that he is a "Provençal"; why should he be a Greek more than a Latin? There are two "Provences," one at the northeast of the Rhone valley, characterized by its steep hills, its violent colouring, its roaring winds, which is permeated with Latin memories; and there is another which begins at the stony plain of the Crau and stretches towards the blue sea its desertlike expanse, dotted here and there with bushes of rosemary and laburnum. With its curving hills, which stand out clearly against the deep blue of the sky, and the shore fringed with gorgeous vegetation, it recalls strangely to the traveller some parts of the Peloponnesian countryside between Argos and Olympia. It is there that the first colonies of Greeks settled and founded Massalia which has become Marseilles. Maurras, son of the colonists of old, found in Athens what remained of his paternal hearth. When he set foot on this sacred soil he was moved far beyond his wont. But after that first outburst, he always remained the master of his emotions.

To love with passion, to hate with excess, but to subordinate these feelings to the rule of reason, such is in short the teaching that Maurras sought in Athens, and such is the lesson we may derive from 'Anthinea.'

Critics claim that Maurras discovered a new field of emotion in Greece, but this is an exaggeration. He started on his journey with ideas and sentiments, artistic impressions, literary, philosophical and social opinions which were very definite. His constant preoccupation in presence of the masterpieces of old Greece was to verify these ideas, to fortify them with new arguments and to marshall them in a general theory according to a plan which was already perfected in his mind. In the historical cities—Athens, Rome, Florence, Paris—he looked for the eternal principles which have been everywhere the backbone of literature and politics, exactly as he looked for these same principles in the works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Racine. Barrès, in his 'Voyage de Sparte,' found the ultimate reasons for his nationalism. Maurras, in 'Anthinea,' found his strongest arguments in favour of classicism against romanticism.

Except in the preface, which, as a matter of fact, was written after the book itself, we find no declaration of monarchical tendency. Evidently Maurras was still hesitating between a democratic republic, such as we understand it today, and an aristocratic republic such as those of the Greeks. His leanings were, however, already in favour of monarchy, for we have a letter dated May, 1896, addressed to Greeks who had asked him for an expression of opinion, in which he admits having refrained from advising them in favour of the monarchical system, because he was ashamed to admit the errors of his own countrymen.

It is easy to deduce the sources of the author's political opinions from his books. What were his dominant passions? First, an intense love of order in every domain of human activity, and consequently a veritable horror of disorder; an innate sense of hierarchy, without which, for him, real order is inconceivable; a thirst for logical organization, a constant care for the welfare of his nation, for we must not forget that Maurras is intensely patriotic and nationalistic.

In 1899, in the statutes of the "Ligue d'Action Française" Maurras wrote: "A true Nationalist places his Motherland above everything; consequently he conceives, treats, and solves all political questions in their connection with national interests; I say with national interests, and not with caprices; with national interests, and not with his tastes, leanings, or repugnances; with national interests and not with his slovenliness of mind or his private calculation or his personal interests." The foundation of all his theories is love for his country, and his aim is the welfare and safety of his country. In selecting the means to attain these ends, his criterion is that good ideas in every domain—political, social, literary, or religious—are those which most regularly have given favourable results. By well-proven facts, whether in the present or in the past, one must distinguish the ideas which have been satisfactory and those the action of which has been nefarious. Then they must be grouped in series, and the general causes of every series must be determined; these causes must be considered either good or bad according to the results they have produced. Maurras insists on a very careful distinction between the facts which depend on the particular temperaments of men considered as individuals, and the facts which depend on social or political institutions. He abandons willingly to moralists the selection of individual discipline which may contribute to the uplift of the individual, for he is interested only in the selection of social institutions, which may obtain this result for the whole of the community. By the application of this method, Maurras decided that it was wise for France to revert to traditional monarchy.

This is not the place to discuss the wisdom of his conclusion; but one may draw attention to the extraordinary audacity of his attitude. The number of his opponents never troubled him, and he never hesitated to give vent to the most unpopular views provided they tallied with his system. Evidently his ideas were not entirely original; he was indebted to Bonald and Joseph de Maistre, to Taine, to LePlay, and to Fustel de Coulanges. In Auguste Comte he found a philosophical doctrine, highly realistic, and reasoning from the general to the particular. Comte never attacked faith, which he considered beneficent to the majority of men, and we must not forget that Maurras, although in favour of religion as a moral motive, is himself an unbeliever. Comte, like Maurras, is not an individualist; he said, "Human societies are composed of families and not of individuals." In Comte's 'Politics' we find many statements which agree absolutely with the opinions of Maurras as to the weakness and disadvantages of democratic government.

In the various conceptions of liberty, Maurras endeavours to separate the idea of liberty from the many abstractions which obscure it; he tries to bring it back to a practical conception of liberties, precise, definite, lasting, and entirely free from arbitrary decisions of the state. This conception of precise liberties, in opposition to the vague liberty promised by democracy, led him logically to decentralisation, which is not specially territorial, but founded mostly on secondary powers, such as churches, universities, courts of justice, trade unions and professional organizations. These associations would be supported by the autonomy of the municipal councils and of the provincial assemblies, which would be as completely independent as the safety of the state as a whole would permit. Many of these ideas he found in the works of adversaries such as Proudhon, the great French Socialist, or Ernest Renan. Nevertheless, the theory of Maurras is original in this, that he selected in all the different systems what ideas would fit in his own, and dovetail perfectly with each other. His studies were enormous, but after having acquired thus all the elements of his conclusions, he ventured to the logical end of his syllogism without being dismayed by the prospect of opposition. This opposition was not only strong—it was nearly unanimous. His conception of the monarchy is peculiar in this, that it is absolutely utilitarian and impersonal. He never considered the personality of the man he would put on the throne. To him it was immaterial. The monarch is not an end; he is a means. To prove that the responsibility of a king is real as contrasted with the responsibility of a Parliament, which he regards as illusory, he does not shrink from statements such as this: "With a king you can always, if need be, resort to deposition, exile or the scaffold"; or, "A monarchy is always checked by regicide, but where is the check on a democratic republic?" His ideal sovereign is not Louis XIV, who in creating absolute monarchy opened wide the road to revolution; his king must be the "protector of the French republics."

All these theories are set forth in 'L'Enquête sur la Monarchie.' Started in the last days of July, 1900, in 'La Gazette de France,' it was a series of conversations with leaders of the Monarchist party and also with some adversaries, and it embodies practically all of the system of Maurras, which became the system accepted by the Neo-Royalist party in France. After 'L'Enquête,' Maurras undertook a new exposition of facts and principles in a series of articles published in 'Le Figaro,' beginning August, 1901. Some years later another series of articles was gathered in book form under the title 'Kiel et Tanger,' a masterly study of France's foreign policies, principally those of Hanotaux and Delcassé.

The first impression after reading these books is that the whole theory is opposed to the opinions of the immense majority in France. Who are, then, his supporters? Most likely the members of the former nobility and of the old Royalist party? Not at all. Maurras wrote: "Our paper is very little read among the French clergy or among the so-called high society. There we are little known, and less appreciated. For a long time Count Léon de Montesquiou was our only friend there." Strange to say, it is mostly among the middle class and the common people that Maurras has succeeded in recruiting followers. A curious proof of this is found in the 'Action Française' subscription lists. During the War the newspaper was hampered by lack of funds. The Directors appealed to the public, opening subscription lists in the paper. They obtained thus at different periods since 1916 more than four million francs. If one scans these lists, one finds very few so-called great names or large gifts, but an enormous number of small ones coming from very modest "petits bourgeois" and workingmen.

When in 1899 Maurras and his friends undertook to reorganize 'L'Action Française,' an insignificant review which appeared only once a month, it was surely a very bold attempt. They had no money, no influence, and no friends in the Royalist party; the Conservatives distrusted them; the Republican Liberals and even the Nationalist followers of Déroulède simply abominated them. Nevertheless, between 1897 and 1900, Maurras did not hesitate to wage the most relentless war against all comers who did not share his nationalistic views. This rash young man had the greatest confidence not only in himself, but above all in the power of ideas which he considered sound and reasonable. Curiously enough, he at first disregarded entirely the Catholic factor in the situation, and yet there was little doubt that after the long struggle between the Church and the Republic, he was sure to find there many adherents. But he was above all a positivist, and metaphysics did not enter into his plan of campaign. He even proclaimed frequently that he was a pagan. But we must understand that he simply referred to a certain trend of philosophical ideas, not to religious creed.

Maurras evidently tried to unite all conservatives in their opposition to the political theories he disapproved. Is he, then, a reactionary? When we consider his theories on Syndicalism, the rights of unions, collective bargaining, accident insurance, working-men's pensions, subsidies in case of unemployment, old age, the encouragement of large families, and the restrictions he is ready to apply to the rights of property, we realise that his ideas are the opposite of reactionary. And this explains the fact that several socialists have joined the movement, one of the most curious examples being Pierre Dumas, former secretary of the Bolshevik Garment-workers Union, now one of the chief propagandists of the cause. Jules Guesde, without realising it, was in absolute agreement with Maurras when he wrote in 1904: "You bind Socialism to the Republic and to the French Revolution. This is a mistake. To us, Socialism results from purely economic phenomena, and our conception is in absolute opposition to yours. You consider the Republic as the first chapter or the preface of Socialism. We do not. Socialism is not a political problem."

On March 21, 1908, 'L'Action Française' became a daily. This transformation was effected against the advice of all the heads of the Royalist party at the time. The influence of the paper grew slowly but steadily. When Léon Daudet, son of the great novelist Alphonse Daudet, joined Maurras in the undertaking, he brought the help of a great name, and an intimate knowledge of the tactics of their adversaries, for Daudet, after his marriage to the granddaughter of Victor Hugo, lived for years in the intimacy of members of the radical party. His rare gifts as a pamphleteer, his sense of humour, his talent for invective, even his violence served well the cause he had embraced. He could influence people who would not or could not have been impressed by the cold logic of Maurras.

Experience having shown that the followers of 'L'Action Française' were generally recruited among young men, particularly students in colleges and universities, Murras helped in the creation of organizations which are in a way establishments of learning—(1) "Le Cercle Proudhon," named after Joseph Proudhon, the famous French socialist, which is an association for the study of Socialism and the future organisation of labour; (2) "L'Institut d'Action Française"—a sort of independent university with some eight or ten professors, who give, on various matters, courses in which the doctrine of Integral Nationalism is upheld—principally on the History of France, considered from the point of view of politics, religion, literature, diplomacy, trades-unionism; (3) the "Nouvelle Libraire Nationale," which spreads the teachings of the Institute. It publishes treatises of political doctrine, books on political and diplomatic history, social and regional studies, and a few literary criticisms. Some of its offerings, such as 'L'Histoire de deux Peuples' by Jacques Bainville, and 'L'Avant-Guerre' or 'Le stupide dix-neuvième Siècle' by Léon Daudet, and some books by Maurras himself have had a large sale.

As regards political propaganda, properly speaking, Maurras has helped in the creation of a "Ligue d'Action Française," which today has organized sections in every district of Paris, in most of the important cities, and even in many sous-préfectures. From that league came "L'Association des Camelots du Roi," which is the strong-arm squad of the organization, and by far the least interesting and most objectionable part of it. But Maurras evidently recognised that some of his young followers needed an outlet for their high animal spirits, and he thus provided for it. At the declaration of war in August, 1914, Maurras stopped all opposition to the Government, except that sort of opposition that any good Republican, Clemenceau for instance, would have practised. He devoted all his efforts and those of his followers to the service of the Government, and it cannot be denied that his patriotic ardour was of great service to the cause of France.

It has been often said that Maurras and his collaborators are nothing but cold logicians, unable to move those they try to convince. It is true that in his work all emotions belong to the intellect. Maurras is not a man of sentiment, but is a man of passion, and we must not confuse passion and sentiment, although passion is an amplifier of sentiment. To those who reproached him for giving no part to sentiment, Maurras always answered: "All our doctrine is based on the sentiment of patriotism." It is perfectly true. But the theoretical construction of Maurras is purely intellectual, and leaves out "the reasons that reason does not understand," the reasons of the heart. In 'L'Étang de Berre' and in 'Anthinea' may be found pages which show deep emotion, but the reasons of the heart are hard to find. They seem to have been absorbed by the passion of understanding and the intense desire for a logical conclusion. This is probably why nearly all women and some types of men are entirely untouched by his propaganda.

Of average height, thin and spare, quick in his movements, always dressed in dark clothes, an expression of gravity on his finely chiselled face, Maurras speaks in a very low voice. His eyes read the words on your lips. It seems that the perpetual silence which surrounds him has enhanced his power of meditation. Looking at him, one immediately realises that his mind is at work. Hard-working, methodical, always bringing concrete ideas to their abstract roots, and all physical facts to an intellectual demonstration, he has contributed more than anyone else toward the restoration to politics of the name of Political Science, which had been almost lost. A born fighter, sometimes brutal, Maurras is absolutely disinterested. Once he wrote of himself as "one who never desired anything that is not intellectual, without wealth to acquire, or fortune to defend," and his friends as well as his enemies know that it is the truth. Always anxious to pass unnoticed, an enemy of self-advertisement, alone when circumstances permit, most often silent, he might easily pass for an exceptionally modest and unassuming scholar. In fact, he is totally free from anything that could resemble worldly ambition, thirst for luxury or honours. As for the ambition of mastering minds, "the strongest of all passions" (according to the first Napoleon), it is evident that he is the most ambitious of men.

Ségard paints a striking picture of Maurras about 1893, alone in his little student's room, owning nothing but his pen, and undertaking the destruction of Rousseau's work, so as to be able to rebuild French society upon the very principle that the solitary dreamer of the Eighteenth Century seemed to have destroyed for ever. Such an ambition is so prodigious that it appears inordinate; it involves a certain mysticism. In fact, political faith is to Maurras what religious faith is to others, and he speaks of political truth as a theologian speaks of religious truth. This state of mind has its advantages: an absolute sense of mastery, broadness of conception, continuity, cohesion, power for proselytism, and authority; it has also its drawbacks—inability to compromise, partiality, and a dryness which tends to exclude the force of persuasion generally derived from sentiment or imagination. His greatest gift is that of discussion; he is a marvellous dialectician. The selection of words plays an important part in his statements of doctrine, as well as in his answers to objections, so much so that his followers themselves often misrepresent him when they try to translate his ideas into ordinary French. Some of his arguments are so startling that his opponents remain literally dazzled. Sometimes he is violent, but even in his anger he remains cool-headed. He reasons clearly, and one realises that he would cool down instantly if he thought it would serve his cause. His conception of the future is bold. He tries to bind the present to the past, but only in so far as that past is like the present. In spite of appearances, he is more of an innovator than a reactionary.

'Anthinea' is probably the most attractive of his books, but it is not in this book that we find his true style. It is rather in 'L'Enquête sur la Monarchie,' 'Le Dilemme de Marc Sangnier,' 'L'Avenir de l'Intelligence' and 'Kiel et Tanger' that we find his greatest qualities. No style is clearer, purer, more elegant, more incisive, more inspired with intellectual passion. The language recalls Voltaire, and sometimes Pascal in the 'Lettres Provinciales.' There are very few figures of speech, but they are particularly accurate. The sentence is generally short, of very regular construction, rather Greek than Latin, seldom periodic. Inversions and other oratorical devices are rare; the punctuation by its absolute regularity reflects and aids the direct appeal of the thought; the selection of words aims at simplicity and accuracy rather than brilliance. In neglecting picturesqueness and imagery, Maurras has deprived himself voluntarily of many advantages, but he makes up for it by extraordinary resources in the shaping of his ideas. He has succeeded thus in creating a strictly personal style, which can be compared only with the best, that of his classical precursors. His enemies as well as his friends admit that he is one of the greatest prose writers of modern France.

Maurras is a born statesman (in the French meaning of the word), as others are born mathematicians. He possesses an intuition for politics which is very rare and he has rendered unique service to French intelligence. In the ceaseless eddy of ideas, he has found a stable centre of thought. No young Frenchman who wishes to determine his own political aspirations, sentiments and opinions can afford to neglect the 'Enquête sur la Monarchie'; he may admit nothing—statements of doctrine, principles or conclusions—but he will know his own thoughts better, and having read the book once, return to it for further consideration of the ideas presented.

For the thoughtful foreigner who is interested in France's destiny, Maurras sets forth a point of view which cannot be overlooked or lightly set aside. Intellectually, the French Revolution and all that it implies must be referred to the influence of Jean-Jacques

Rousseau. Maurras has built up a new doctrine, a new point of departure, without appealing to any other sentiments than the love of his country and the love of truth. He has created a new state of mind, the ultimate consequence of which cannot be gauged.

Maurras gives the lie to the old Parisian saying "The South is everything that is not serious." Truly there is among the Southerners of France a much keener and colder spirit of observation than the Parisians think. Many names of Southerners could be cited to prove it: Montesquieu, Montaigne, Gassendi, Vauvenargues, Guizot, Renouvier. Southern criticism has been called very justly by Albert Thibaudet a criticism of romanticism, and it is a fact that this anti-romantic movement originated in the South. Lasserre, author of 'Le Romantisme français,' and Jean Carrère, author of 'Les mauvais Maîtres,' came from the south east. The South, romantic by its monuments and its landscapes, is not romantic in its tendencies. The romantic writers came generally from the north of the Loire and have influenced the Southerners only to a moderate extent. The latter are, after all, classic, with a love for light and clearness, an instinctive distaste for what Carrère calls "the vague idea and the disordered style that romanticism had hurled into French literature, opening wide the door to the tumultuous barbarousness of the North. France needed the purification of Mediterranean civilisation, the reviving heat of the Greco-Roman sun."

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CHAPTER X

ROMAIN ROLLAND (1866–)

INTERNATIONALISM, which had its place in the eclecticism of Anatole France, was predominant in the narrower thought of Romain Rolland, who is on that account an interesting exponent of a movement which played a large part in the intellectual life of Paris before the war. The older writer remained thoroughly French; he had shouldered a musket in 1870, and would have done so in 1914 if the government had acceded to his request. Romain Rolland belonged to the generation which had been in no way responsible for the disaster of 1870, but suffered from its consequences; he grew up in an atmosphere of national depression and dissatisfaction, and found the way out in passionate devotion to international interests. When internationalism and nationalism clashed with sudden violence in the fall of 1914, it was internationalism that prevailed in Romain Rolland's mind, and he retired to Geneva to admonish his countrymen for their patriotic excesses. The result was an estrangement which made his voluntary exile from France no longer a matter of choice. Before we examine the circumstances in greater detail, it may be well to consider the conditions of mind which impelled Romain Rolland to alienate himself from his fellow countrymen at a time when the very existence of France was in peril.

When Romain Rolland came to Paris in the early eighties, internationalism was very much "in the air," and the impulse fell upon his impressionable youth with redoubled force through his favourite studies—music and painting, which are the most international of all the arts. To him the disaster of 1870 was "the regeneration of the artistic spirit of the nation," and of that regeneration the main instrument—not only in music, but also in drama, poetry and the plastic arts—was Wagner. He tells us with what extraordinary mystic exultation he and his generation attended the first Wagner recitals at Paris. "Shut up to wither in an urban civilisation which was bookish to excess, far from action, far from nature, far from everything that is true and strong in life, we slaked our thirst from the sincerest, the most generous of souls, filled with all the passions of the world and all the inspirations of the earth. In the 'Meistersinger,' 'Tristan,' and 'Siegfried' we drank the joy, love and strength that we needed."

Romain Rolland devoted himself ardently to the study of music and was one of the first French students to write a doctoral thesis on a musical subject—'The Origins of Opera before Lully and Scarlatti.' He became a professor of the history of music at the École Normale, and wrote lives of Beethoven and Handel, besides many excellent articles of musical criticism. But he never lost the original trend and impulse of his first enthusiasm for German music. "I have never," he wrote in 1905, "concealed my preference for German music; and I consider, even today, Richard Strauss as the leading musical personality in Europe." This preference is curiously illustrated by the article from which this extract is taken, an account of a "Musikfest" at Strasbourg in May, 1905. It was an attempt to establish on the soil of Alsace a competition between German and French music, and, according to Romain Rolland's own showing, the competition was so arranged as to give German composers an unfair advantage. On the German side, the leading composers, Strauss and Mahler, were there to conduct their own compositions; on the French side, a competent orchestral conductor, M. Chevillard, was there to conduct truncated fragments from a work by César Franck, with which he was not in sympathy; as if this were not enough, this selection was immediately followed on the programme by the final scene of the 'Meistersinger,' with its noisy protest against foreign fashions. Romain Rolland's comment on this is that French composers and orchestral directors should not consent to such unfair conditions; but how they were to remedy them—except by staying away, as the French composers did, possibly because they were not invited—Romain Rolland does not reveal. He did not stay away himself, and by far the greater part of this article on 'French and German Music' is devoted to the latter part of the subject.

Of this international, or rather German, trend in music, it is enough to say that it enabled Romain Rolland to appreciate Richard Strauss, but not Debussy. Still, he might have retained his German sympathies in music, and yet have been a good patriot; the definite determining influence in the other direction was an intellectual rather than a musical or artistic one—that of Tolstoy. A vague Tolstoyism was very much in vogue in Paris during Romain Rolland's student days, and he was strongly affected by it. The three artists he constantly preferred from his infancy were, he says, Tolstoy, Wagner, and Shakespeare:—

> "I have loved Tolstoy profoundly; I have never ceased to love him. For two or three years past, I have been living enveloped in the atmosphere of his thought; I was certainly more familiar with his creations, with 'War and Peace,' 'Anna Karenina,' and 'The Death of Ivan Ilyitch' than with any of the French masterpieces. The goodness, the intelligence, the absolute truth of this great man make him for me the surest guide in the moral anarchy of our time."

Romain Rolland was, however, perplexed and distressed by his guide's open antagonism to art and to the artists he loved, especially in music; and in his perplexity he wrote frankly to the great Russian novelist—now become a prophet—about it. Tolstoy responded in a long letter, dated October 4, 1887, in which he sketched the principles (and some of the applications of those principles) afterwards developed in 'What is Art?' When Romain Rolland came, in 1911, to write the life of Tolstoy, he treated the criticisms of his master with a frankness worthy of Tolstoy himself:—

> "Setting aside his literary studies, what could he well know of contemporary art? When was he able to study painting, and what could he have heard of European music, this country gentleman who had passed three-fourths of his life in his Muscovite village, and who had not visited Europe since 1860; and what did he see when he was upon his travels, except the schools, which were all that interested him? He speaks of paintings from hearsay, citing pell-mell among the decadents such painters as Puvis de Chavannes, Manet, Monet, Böcklin, Stuck, and Klinger; confidently admiring Jules Breton and L'Hermite on account of their excellent sentiments; despising Michelangelo, and among the painters of the soul never once naming Rembrandt. In music he felt his way better, but hardly knew

anything of it; he could not get beyond the impressions of his childhood, swore by those who were already classics about 1840, and had not become familiar with any later composers (excepting Tchaikowsky, whose music made him weep); he throws Brahms and Richard Strauss into the bottom of the same bag, teaches Beethoven his business, and, in order to judge Wagner, he thought it was sufficient to attend a single representation of 'Siegfried,' at which he arrived after the rise of the curtain, while he left in the middle of the second act. In the matter of literature he is, it goes without saying, rather better informed. But by what curious aberration did he evade the criticism of the Russian writers whom he knew so well, while he laid down the law to foreign poets, whose temperament was as far as possible removed from his own, and whose leaves he merely turned with contemptuous negligence!"

But, oddly enough, while Romain Rolland rejected nearly every artistic judgment Tolstoy had delivered, he accepted the general principle by which Tolstoy arrived at his conclusions. Even as late as 1911, Romain Rolland writes: "Tolstoy's conception is fundamentally fruitful and vital, in spite of its Utopianism and a touch of puerility." In the eighties he accepted it without these reserves, and in the nineties he devoted much time and labour to carrying it out in practice. The story of this enterprise is contained in his 'Le Théâtre du Peuple,' published in 1903, but it had begun many years before. The attempt is to apply to the drama Tolstoy's formula and test of popular appeal, and in carrying it out Romain Rolland planned a series of dramas founded mainly upon the history of the French Revolution. Of these some ten were projected, but only four were written or acted: 'Les Loups' (1898), 'Le Triomphe de la Raison' (1899), 'Danton' (1900), 'Le 14 Juillet' (1902). Paul Seippel, Romain Rolland's enthusiastic disciple and biographer, acknowledges that the plays had no real success, and Romain Rolland himself admitted the failure of the enterprise by not continuing it. As one reads these dramas—closet dramas of the most academic type—one cannot see how the result could have been otherwise. What attracted Romain Rolland to the revolutionary period was its fondness for abstract principles and its delight in vague disquisitions about liberty and progress, of which the dramas are full. There is much more enthusiasm in the treatise 'Le Théâtre du Peuple' than in the plays, but it is significant that the section advocating a national historical drama ends with quotations from Schiller and Goethe elevating world-citizenship above patriotism and world literature above national literature. It is hard to see how a historical drama which has no national spirit can have any popular appeal.

It was about the time that this enterprise of a national drama which was to be international in spirit showed signs of coming to naught that Romain Rolland brought to fruition the design he had long contemplated of an international novel. The first part of 'Jean-Christophe' was published in 'Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine' in 1904. The early life of the hero is evidently based on that of Beethoven—his Flemish origin, his grandfather who came from Antwerp to Bonn to be concert master for the local prince, his devoted mother, his good-for-nothing, drunken father, who exploited him as an infant prodigy, and whom as a boy he had to displace legally as the head of the family. All this is taken over bodily, and even the apotheosis of the River Rhine is suggested by a passage in Beethoven's correspondence. But everything is treated with imaginative originality, and the figures are as living as if the novelist had created them anew. In fact, the early books which cling closest to Beethoven's unhappy childhood and youth have more freshness and vigour than the adventures of the hero after he has been transferred to the musical life of Paris so familiar at first hand to the author. In the later volumes, the reader, especially if he is not of musical tastes, is sometimes inclined to believe that the author lets his musical learning run away with him. In the earlier books this element is kept subordinate and in contact with life, finding utterance chiefly through the mouth of the Tolstoyan Uncle Gottfried, who sings only folk songs and pronounces everything written by the great masters "ugly"—ugly because it is stupid, stupid because it has nothing to say; music must be modest and sincere, and say true and honest things. This is pure Tolstoy, but it is well put in the mouth of the simple-minded Gottfried, and is much easier reading than the long disquisitions on modern music in the middle volumes. If the ordinary reader finds these discouraging, he may be relieved to know that the author found the task he had set himself a burdensome one, and was glad when the tenth volume was finished. In the end, the hero, purified from his passions by suffering, arrives at a Gœthean grandeur of soul and recognises no national distinctions; the more he owed to German idealism, the more need he felt of French lucidity and order.

It is obvious that at this time no permanent judgment can be passed on these lofty sentiments. The great and immediate success of the book, or series of books, not merely in France but all the world over, was due not to its internationalism, but to its natural grace and charm, its admirable character-studies, especially of women, and its bitter satire of artistic and fashionable society in Paris at the beginning of this century. The loose, discursive scheme of the series, which included such disparate elements, opened up a fresh, if not a new path, and had considerable influence on the development of European fiction during the decade or more extending from the publication of the first part in 1904 to the early years of the War. The detailed study of the hero's birth and childhood had earlier parallels in English fiction, notably in 'David Copperfield' (which probably suggested it to Rolland) and in 'The Way of all Flesh,' which, though written long before, had only just been published. But Rolland's method of treatment created a new vogue, and is probably responsible for a number of similar studies of infancy and boyhood by English novelists which appeared while 'Jean-Christophe' was still running its course—Hugh Walpole's 'Fortitude,' Gilbert Cannan's 'Mendel,' Compton Mackenzie's 'Sinister Street,' and D. H. Lawrence's 'Sons and Lovers.' The later books of 'Jean-Christophe' awakened less interest and had less influence; more knowledge was needed for appreciation, and still more for imitation, for which indeed the limited success of the later volumes offered small encouragement.

It was perhaps by accident, and perhaps by unconscious design, that the smaller communities of the Rhine valley came in for less severe criticism than the society of the Parisian capital. No one, at the time, thought of attributing to the author anything more than a philosophic internationalism which was widespread among the intellectuals of all countries and was held to make for peace. It was therefore a surprise to many admiring readers (though perhaps it ought not to have been[1]), when, at the very outset of the war, Romain Rolland took his place, not in the midst of the conflict, but above it and apart from it. In the safe seclusion of Geneva he assumed not merely justification for his own attitude of detachment, but his competence to lecture all parties to the great struggle, his own country among the rest. He condemned the Allies for accepting the help of the Japanese and other Oriental races, and the Socialists for allowing their feelings of patriotism to get the better of their political theories. The latter passage was perhaps the one which gave the main ground of offence, and it is only fair to quote it in its entirety:

> "As for you socialists who on both sides claim to be defending liberty against tyranny—French liberty against the Kaiser, German liberty against the Czar, is it a question of defending one despotism against another? Unite and attack both.
>
> "There was no reason for war between the Western nations; French, English, and German, we are all brothers and do not hate one another. The war-preaching press is envenomed by a minority, a minority vitally interested in maintaining these hatreds; but our peoples, I know, ask for peace and liberty and that alone. The real tragedy, to one situated in the midst of the conflict and able to look down from the high plateaus of Switzerland into all the hostile camps, is the patent fact that actually each of the nations is being menaced in its dearest possessions—in its honour, its independence, its life. Who has brought these plagues upon them? Brought them to the desperate alternative of overwhelming their adversary or dying? None other than their governments and above all, in my opinion, the three great culprits, the three rapacious eagles, the three empires, the tortuous policy of the house of Austria, the ravenous greed of Czarism, the brutality of Prussia. The worst

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[1] See 'Dans la Maison' (French text), p. 234 and p. 244.

enemy of each nation is not without, but within its frontiers, and none has the courage to fight against it. It is the monster of a hundred heads, the monster named Imperialism, the will to pride and domination, which seeks to absorb all, or subdue all, or break all, and will suffer no greatness except itself. For the Western nations Prussian imperialism is the most dangerous. Its hand uplifted in menace against Europe has forced us to join in arms against this outcome of a military and feudal caste, which is the curse not only of the rest of the world but also of Germany itself, whose thought it has subtly poisoned. We must destroy this first: but not this alone; the Russian autocracy too will have its turn. Every nation to a greater or less extent has an imperialism of its own, and whether it be military, financial, feudal, republican, social, or intellectual, it is always the octopus sucking the best blood of Europe. Let the free men of all the countries of Europe when the war is over take up again the motto of Voltaire: *'Ecrasons l'infâme!'* "

This appeal was printed in a Swiss newspaper ('Le Journal de Genève') in September, 1914, when the victorious invader was still advancing upon Paris, and every Frenchman worthy of the name was putting forth all that was in him to withstand the assault. French sentiment was outraged at Romain Rolland's suggestion of divided counsels and divided efforts at such a crisis, when the very life of the nation was hanging in the balance, and public opinion passed upon him a sentence of ostracism which seems likely to be permanent. Like his hero, Jean-Christophe, he was allowed to return to his native country because of the last illness of his mother, but France has not forgiven him, and it is doubtful whether she ever will.

'Colas Breugnon,' written before the war, but published after it, is a Rabelaisian study of life in the sixteenth century in Rolland's native town of Clamecy in Burgundy. The author's style, which in 'Jean-Christophe' was unaffected even to negligence, is tortured in this later book into extraordinary and exasperating tricks of rhythm and rhyme, which have fortunately disappeared again in the essays written at a later date, though published earlier, under the title of 'Au dessus de la Mêlée. 'Colas Breugnon' is merely a literary tour de force, and hardly a successful one. It imitates the superficial excrescences of Rabelais—including the most offensive ones—without reproducing his intellectual power and insight into human nature. Its publication was followed by that of 'Les Précurseurs,' pacifist pamphlets written during the War, a pacifist drama 'Liluli,' and two pacifist novels, 'Clérambault' and 'Pierre et Luce', composed after the War.

None of these added anything to the author's reputation, which must rest primarily upon the early volumes of 'Jean-Christophe,' and in the second place upon his books of musical criticism and biography. Highly endowed intellectually and emotionally, and possessed with a somewhat vague idealism almost mystical in many of its expressions, Romain Rolland has a communicable sincerity which is exceedingly attractive. If some of his dreams of universal peace, kindness, and mutual appreciation seem unattainable in a world shattered by the War and brought face to face with immediate problems of physical life and death, they were nevertheless good dreams, and there were many who shared them in the better time when they seemed still capable of realisation. If Romain Rolland continued to dream when the time for action had come, and found fault with those who were dreaming no longer, one must remember that this is the weak side of the idealist's faith. Like his master

Tolstoy, he believed in the miraculous efficacy of non-resistance and simplicity of heart while he rejected any divine authority for these principles, and he continued to believe in them when they were contradicted by the facts. A certain vagueness and looseness in his thinking had been remarked by the critics before the War, long before any one suspected the possibility of his estrangement from the heart of France. Again like Tolstoy, he invested the "people" with imaginary virtues, as if they were naturally endowed with gifts and graces not to be found among those of higher social station and greater intelligence. As a matter of fact, it was among the "bourgeoisie" that Romain Rolland found readers. The "people," so called, had as little taste for his works of musical criticism and biography and his novels of intellectual and spiritual refinement as they had for his international-national dramas. It is among the intellectuals of the middle class that sympathy with his views and appreciation of his work and personality are still to be found. He would be one of the last authors to find a hearing with a victorious proletariate, which would have as little patience with his panaceas of universal good-will as they would have understanding of the essentially academic qualities of a mind distinguished for the delicacy of its trained sensibilities rather than for its native power of grappling with the hard facts of everyday life.

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CHAPTER XI

EUGÈNE BRIEUX (1858–   )

In his 'Discours de Réception à l'Académie Française,' Brieux (as he prefers to be called) made reference with pardonable pride to his humble parentage and early struggles towards dramatic authorship. Born of workingclass parents in a characteristic workingclass quarter of Paris (the faubourg du Temple) he found himself an orphan with a primary school education, for whom the battle of life had already begun in dead earnest. His aspirations were towards literature in general and the drama in particular, and he sought his way thither by the beaten path of study; the five-cent volumes of a popular series called the "Bibliothèque Nationale" were within his modest resources and he often read them with the aid of the light on some unfrequented stairway. So he made acquaintance with Chateaubriand and Mürger, Goethe and the Greek and Latin classics in translation, while he was earning a scanty living as a bank clerk and later as a journalist. "At the age of fifteen," he says in his speech to the Academy, "I wrote my first drama, and I promised myself that one day I would occupy the place in which I am now standing." Few youthful ambitions seemed at the time less likely of fulfillment, but by the time he was 21, Brieux's name appeared along with that of

Gaston Salandri as joint author of a one-act play in verse, 'Bernard Palissy,' produced at the Cluny Theatre. Success, however, was not to come so speedily and easily as that, and Brieux was obliged to abandon Paris for journalism at Dieppe and Rouen. He joined the staff of the 'Nouvelliste,' in the latter city in 1885, and worked his way up to be editor-in-chief during the next half-dozen years. The 'Nouvelliste' had an excellent reputation, and had numbered the most distinguished residents at Rouen, Flaubert and Maupassant, among its contributors, so that Brieux was not wasting his time. He was acquiring a thorough knowledge of provincial life and he was still writing plays—'Le Bureau des Divorces' (1886), 'Sténio' (1888), 'Corneille à Petit-Couronne' (1890), and 'La Fille de Duramé' (1890). "For ten years," he writes, "I peddled my manuscripts about in all the theatres of Paris; most often they were not even read." At last, André Antoine, who had founded the Théâtre Libre in 1887, accepted 'Ménages d'Artistes' and produced it in 1890. It was not a striking success, but Brieux felt that he was fairly launched on his dramatic career, and Antoine had sufficient confidence in him to put on, two years later, 'Blanchette,' which at once caught public attention and ran to its hundredth performance. Brieux's promise to himself was well on its way to fulfillment.

'Ménages d'Artistes' is not a good play; it does not face squarely the problem with which it attempts to grapple. Among the half-dozen or so of "artistes" there is not a single real artist; they are all "cabotins," "poseurs" or "ratés"—unsuccessful amateurs or unscrupulous journalists. The technique is old fashioned, harking back to the asides, mechanical coincidences, and other stage devices of Scribe and Dumas. But it is of interest because it already indicates the author's point of view, presented in traditional fashion by a "raisonneur"—the old mother-in-law from the country, Mme. Legrand. When Jacques talks about his "sacred mission and imperative duty," as a poet, she retorts:

> "His first duty is to keep the pot boiling at home. . . . When a man has that kind of a malady, he does not marry. He is free to live in an attic on five cents a day. When he has taken a wife and eaten up her dowry, he becomes a rag-picker rather than let her die of hunger."

It is this bourgeois duty of providing for one's wife and children that is the lesson of the play, and the moral would have been more pointed if Jacques, after his unsuccessful venture in journalism ('Le Journal des Poètes mondains') had gone back to his wife and begun to earn an honest living, as he would have done in real life, instead of adopting the stage expedient of throwing himself under the wheels of an omnibus. The motive assigned is unconvincing; Jacques must have been more of a fool and less of a business man than he is made out to be if he believed that he could be convicted of an offence which had been committed by some one else without his knowledge or consent, under circumstances which made the real facts easy of proof.

'Blanchette' is a better play, especially with the revised and less theatrical third act; Antoine, in fact, omitted the original third act when he took the play to the provinces—a sufficient criticism of its ineffectiveness. Even as the text stands now, the "thesis" is the somewhat superficial one that a country girl is better off if she stays quietly at home than if she attempts to educate herself above her station. But the characters, especially of Blanchette and her parents, are vigorously drawn, and are true to life. The play must have been a wholesome relief from the dramas of adultery then fashionable, and gives a natural and lively presentation of life in a country tavern, neither refined by a false romanticism nor brutalised by exaggerated realism. The love interest is of the slightest, and it was no small achievement to make a successful play out of the simple home life of a country girl to whom nothing happens out of the common.

'M. de Réboval,' another early play, again exhibits the weakness of Brieux's method; it takes a truism which everybody admits but which everybody does not live up to and illustrates it by an exceptional and extravagant instance. M. de Réboval keeps two families in mutual ignorance of each other's existence, and as he is singularly unsympathetic, his conduct, though not without parallels in actual life, is assured of public condemnation; but one hardly recognises it as poetic or any other sort of justice when his son by one woman falls in love with his daughter by the other. For the innocent victims it is a catastrophe which would secure our sympathy if in reality it seemed at all likely to happen; but there are arguments more relative than this to condemn "a double life," and these are not its ordinary or logical consequences.

Brieux returned, with greater success, to the subject of the relations between parents and children (this time in the bourgeoisie) in 'La Couvée.' 'L'Engrenage exposes the evils of political corruption, 'Les Bienfaiteurs' illustrates the difficulties encountered by charitable organizations in their attempts to assist the poor, 'L'Évasion' sets forth the dogmatism of science and the limitations of the deterministic doctrine of heredity—all plays of excellent purpose and creditable workmanship, but hardly calling for further remark, with respect either to their artistic qualities or to the lessons taught, which are undeniably true but also undeniably commonplace. The dramatist found a better theme, and treated it with more skill and conviction in 'Les trois Filles de M. Dupont.' M. Dupont is any French father of the small trading class who has three marriageable daughters and not enough money to provide them with dowries. M. Dupont has personal defects which make him an individual and not merely a type, and his daughters have characters of their own, leading the eldest to a life of respectable but joyless renunciation, the second to a still more disappointing career of vice, and the third to an unhappy marriage. The third, Julie, the heroine of the play, is the most fully individualised and the most attractive, and she is commended to us by the verdicts of both of her sisters as having chosen the preferable solution, but when the curtain falls she is making up her mind to accept the advances of a lover she has hitherto discouraged, so that there really appears no way out for the daughter of a French family which clings to its station in life and is not in a position to buy freedom in the choice of a husband. Brieux's condemnation of a dowry system which sacrifices high-spirited and affectionate young women to the material interests and conventional notions of their parents and husbands will be applauded by most English-speaking readers, and French people who take pride in the national institutions will admit it as a legitimate criticism of a part of the social organization which has obvious limitations. There are, of course, things also to be said against the "mariage d'amour," and American and English social philosophers might think that the institution of marriage would work better if young people would consult their parents more and their passions less; but Brieux was dealing with the French public. He succeeded in conveying to them some wholesome and opportune truths through an artistic medium which can be enjoyed by those who are not immediately concerned with the particular problem presented, but know enough of French life to appreciate the general significance of the situations and the reflections of the characters in the play.

Passing by 'Le Berceau'—on the disadvantages of divorce where there are children—and 'Résultat des Courses'—a slight but amusing exposition of the evils of betting on horse-races, for which Brieux found his material by actual contact with workingmen, whom he invited to the first representation—we come to another play of distinct merit, 'La Robe Rouge' (1900). Again we have a problem of French life and social organization which is capable of telling dramatic presentation and which Brieux has presented with undeniable skill and force. The play is somewhat melodramatic in plot, but is none the less convincing as a setting forth of the evils of a system of judicial administration which makes a judge's promotion dependent on the number of convictions in his district and assumes the guilt of the accused until he is able to prove his innocence. Brieux is not unfair to the judiciary; he represents them as conscientious and high-minded, even to the point of sacrificing their legitimate ambitions. The one unscrupulous member of the order meets with poetic justice at the end of the play, and he is portrayed as below the average of the profession in character and habits, but the impression remains that the system places an undue strain upon the rightminded and gives the ambitious and tyrannical too much power to inflict mental torture upon innocent people who have been entangled by ill chance in the meshes of the criminal law.

'Les Remplaçantes' teaches the humble lesson that it is better for a mother to suckle her own baby, and is perhaps too intimately connected with the Parisian institution of wet nurses to excite much interest in the minds of transatlantic readers. From this Brieux passed at a bound to the play which under the title of 'Damaged Goods' has perhaps done more than anything else to make his name familiar to English-speaking theatre goers and students of social science. Some more extended notice of it is due more to this fact than to its intrinsic merits.

'Les Avariés' is not so much a play as an effort to make known ("vulgariser" is the author's own word) by means of the stage certain facts with reference to an infectious disease. It can hardly be said to have a plot except in so far as the details of a particularly aggravated case are vividly presented in situation and dialogue instead of being coldly recited in a pathological treatise; and the conversations of the doctor, if logically arranged and connected, would make an excellent lecture in a medical course. The deputy of the third act is introduced as the father-in-law of the patient of the first, but as all he has to do is to listen, this is simply a formal indulgence to dramatic convention. There are indeed no real characters—they are mere pegs to hang cases on —and most of them have not even names; "l'épouse, la nourrice, une fille, une ouvrière" are merely indications of the significance of the disease for these classes, and of their instrumentality in spreading it. The only test of the value of this "piece" is whether the facts are correct as stated; there was no occasion for skill in presentation and it would be unfair to discuss the matter from this point of view.

After 'La petite Amie,' which again stresses the importance of allowing young people to consult their own inclinations in marriage rather than the interests and social ambitions of their parents, came another drama which has excited international interest,—'Maternité.' It has for its theme the unusual case of the seduction of a young girl of the bourgeoisie by a young man of her own class and her subsequent death under an attempt at abortion; but the real significance of this sensational plot is to give occasion for the trial of the abortionist, which occupies all of the third act and allows her advocate ample opportunity to dilate on the unreason of a nation which, on the one hand, cries out for more population and, on the other, heaps indignities on the unmarried mother and does not pay government employés enough to support a family. The dramatist sustains the right of the wife to decide how many children she will have, and suggests that a large family is not really a benefit to the State unless the parents have the means to bring their children up properly. Certain aspects of the population question are perhaps unduly stressed, but there is nothing new or revolutionary in the views presented. Annette's fate is a sad one, but no one has yet discovered a way of safeguarding the institutions of marriage and the family (of which Brieux is a stout defender) and at the same time condoning the offence of the "fille-mère." In any particular case—and Brieux has chosen an exceptional one—the arguments in mitigation of responsibility may make a strong appeal to our sympathies; the consequences remain unaltered. The question involves social and economic considerations which the dramatist has not attempted to discuss, and it is not surprising that his treatment of it should be inconclusive. If he succeeded in attracting the attention of people who had not yet faced the facts, he rendered a public service.

After these vehement outbreaks of the spirit of puritanism, which are evidences of the author's zeal for social reform rather than of his dramatic talent, Brieux returned to his earlier style in a series of dramas dealing indeed with social questions but in the way of exposition and suggestion rather than of direct polemic. 'La Déserteuse,' 'Les Hannetons,' 'Simone,' and 'Suzette' all treat phases of the marriage question, and repeat ideas already presented—that marriage is the best practical solution yet discovered, that it should be based upon mutual affection, that the main consideration in the granting of divorce should be the welfare of the children. None of these plays can be said to show any advance in dramatic power, with the possible exception of the 'Hannetons,' which exhibits with abundant comic verve the disadvantages of an irregular as compared with a regular household. The man who seeks to avoid the responsibilities of matrimony by setting up an irregular establishment does not gain, according to Brieux, the freedom he seeks; on the contrary, he saddles himself with an uncongenial companion, inferior to himself in education and intelligence, who gets him into all kinds of disagreeable situations and sticks to him like a leech.

'La Française' presents the typical French wife of the bourgeoisie, not as she appears in plays and novels, but as she exists in real life. It is a charming picture, and it is a pity that for the sake of pointing this contrast between the French wife as she is and as she is so often represented, Brieux has introduced two American characters, whose manners are as impossible as the scraps of English conversation with which they are credited. The idea of the play is as excellent as it is just, but the difficulties Brieux experienced in working it out—for the plot is confused and dull—throw some light on the reasons why the ordinary novelist and dramatist prefer flighty or passionate heroines. The price of the virtuous wife is above rubies, but it is not easy to make her the central figure of an exciting play, and Brieux has not altogether succeeded in the attempt, commendable as it is. His virtuous wife is admirably drawn—she has tact, intelligence and charm—but as there is nothing for her to do except to put an impertinent suitor in his place, the interest of the play evaporates long before the final curtain.

In 'La Foi' Brieux tackled another difficult subject—that of religious superstition. It is, he says, of all his plays "the one which has cost me the most labour and upon which I have expended the most thought and time." It was suggested by the sight of "the excited, suffering and praying crowds of people" at Lourdes, but it was not until a trip to Egypt suggested a transference of the scene to the banks of the Nile that he felt able to treat the subject without offence. The Egyptian setting has not only achieved that purpose—for few who have read or seen it would have suspected that it had any reference to modern problems if the author had not revealed the fact—but it has afforded dramatic opportunities of which the author has not failed to take advantage. It is an excellent piece of dramatic workmanship, and illustrates, by the way, the difficulties every religious reformer has to contend with—above all the passionate clinging of the populace to their inherited beliefs and their desire for the consolation every religion worthy of the name affords. That it reveals or suggests any philosophy profounder than this may be doubted, though the dramatist, in a newspaper interview, explained that it was intended to set forth his belief that "some day humanity, having gone through centuries of evolution, will be able to fight the good fight, to do good and to achieve Beauty and Truth, without leaning on any illusion imagined by themselves, however glorious and noble that illusion may be."

The subject of 'La Femme Seule' (1913) gave an easier opening, for it dealt with a social problem of immediate and practical significance—the economic independence of women and the obstacles an educated single woman has—or had—to overcome in France to win for herself a suitable place in society. Brieux's charming heroine indeed did not overcome them, and though her final speech threatens the tyrant man with the victorious competition of women in the future, for the time being she has to own herself beaten. It is evident that she will become either the wife or the mistress of that rather poor creature René—which is a pity, for if she had had the patience to wait another year, the War would have given her abundant opportunity for honest and remunerative work. Even now that the War is over, one hopes that an intelligent and capable girl has a better chance to fight the battle of life "on her own" than Brieux has given her in this play.

In Brieux's last play before the outbreak of the War led him to throw all his energies into work for the poilus, 'Le Bourgeois aux Champs,' the dramatist showed affectionate care in the devising of plot, character and dialogue, and attempted to teach no object lesson. The hero of the play is a successful Parisian lawyer, a parlour socialist whom the course of events compels to put his principles of equality into practice by marrying his daughter to the chauffeur; but the main interest lies in his attempt to revolutionise a rural community by the introduction of scientific agriculture, about which he really knows nothing. The peasants, of course, dislike and deride his patronising efforts on their behalf, baffle him at every turn, rob him and insult him. He ends by surrendering to the situation and serving up to them the political platitudes they desire. But he is sorry for them, even while he tricks them, and at the bottom of his facile commonplaces about those who toil there is a germ of sincerity and good-will which is endearing. As a character study, it is perhaps Brieux's subtlest and most successful effort, for his M. Cocatrix is composed of generosity and meanness, of truth and falsehood, of devotion and self-seeking, a thoroughly human person, rendered with an irony never bitter because it never ceases to be sympathetic. There is abundant humour and a tolerance for different kinds of people and different views of life, better calculated to achieve Brieux's aims as a social reformer than the direct attacks of his earlier plays. There is also a note of sadness—a touch of disillusion—as if the author had realised that his earlier short cuts to reform the world were as futile as the efforts of M. Cocatrix to revolutionise the management of his farm in a single summer.

Of the plays written since the War, 'Les Américains en France' is so obviously a piece written for the occasion that, in spite of its excellent sentiments, it may be said to belong to journalism rather than to the drama. 'L'Avocat' is a return to the problems of the administration of justice already studied in 'La Robe Rouge.' This time it is the temptation of the advocate defending a client whom he knows to be guilty; there is much less life and movement than in the earlier play, and 'L'Avocat' seems less likely to hold the stage. The approach is more sympathetic, but the very special case of conscience of the pleader (who, in addition to other complications, is in love with his client) gives less opening for the keen criticisms of the judicial system upon which Brieux ventured in 'La Robe Rouge.'

It has seemed worth while to review the dramatic activity of Brieux in some detail, because few French authors are so little understood or so much misunderstood in the English-speaking world. In England he has been extravagantly eulogized by Bernard Shaw, who was naturally inclined to praise another dramatist guilty occasionally of Shaw's constant practice of converting the stage into a platform for social polemics. In America Brieux has been long associated in the public mind exclusively with one pathological play, which showed indeed his courage as a social reformer, but had very little to do with his reputation as a dramatist. In France, perhaps by a natural reaction, there has been a tendency to depreciate Brieux on account of his good intentions, Parisians spoke of him patronisingly as "le bon Brieux" or "the Tolstoy of the Bronx," if one may so translate the local colloquialism of Paris, "le Tolstoï du faubourg du Temple," into its New York equivalent. It is not safe to trust any of these judgments—or indeed all combined—as an adequate estimate of the dramatist's talent and achievements. As a thinker he is neither subtle nor profound, but he is sane and shrewd; the background of bourgeois morality which lies behind his whole work has nothing original about it; it is simply enlightened common sense, but that is by no means a thing to be despised. The real value of his contribution to the drama consists, however, not in this wholesome but commonplace teaching, which indeed sometimes gets in his way as an artist, but in the use that he has made of familiar material. He has given us the humble workers of Paris and of the provincial villages, the struggling tradesmen, teachers, lawyers and doctors, the successful business men and the crafty politicians, neither sentimentalised nor exaggerated, but with a kindly sympathy, which explains and sometimes excuses their faults. Nowhere in contemporary literature can so extensive and so unprejudiced a view of French society be found. With the exception of the fashionable set, which has had more than its share of attention elsewhere, and at which Brieux took a fling in 'L'Armature,' a dramatization of Hervieu's novel, the active life of modern France is shown by him in the light of common day—not merely conducting illicit amours, which in any society is mere by-play, but striving to earn an honest living, to bring up a family respectably, and to adjust the organization of government and industry to the needs of the individual and of the community. Very few modern dramatists have attempted to deal with so many phases of ordinary life as Brieux, and none has achieved more consistent, and, at his best, more conspicuous success.

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CHAPTER XII

EDMOND ROSTAND (1868–1919)

To accept the marvellous with pure delight is the gift of childhood, and romance is the natural expression of the earlier stages of national development. With maturity comes the tendency to subject everything reported or represented to the test of experience or of probability founded on experience. Still, under sufficient stimulus, an individual or an audience may recapture for a while the mood of childhood by suspending disbelief in the unfamiliar. But, at its best, to a mature and sophisticated people, romance is a revival—an attempt to re-establish for a time the habit of mind of an earlier generation—and the further removed one is from that habit of mind, the greater must be the stimulus. In France, the most mature of European nations, Victor Hugo had bridged the gulf with potent rhetoric and lyric fire. In Rostand's time the gulf yawned wider, and the task was all the more difficult because for him romantic drama was the revival of a revival, and he took over, with much that was rich and powerful in the Hugo tradition, much that was hollow and artificial. There was the risk of falling over on the serious side into melodrama, on the comic side into farce—conventional forms of entertainment which rarely outlast the momentary demands they are intended to satisfy. Rostand did not altogether escape either danger; but that he succeeded in creating something, not only of immediate success but of lasting value, is a testimony to his genuine faith and his real power as a poet.

In his first acted play, 'Les Romanesques,' he approached the problem with a caution which indicates full realisation of the difficulties of the undertaking. He disarmed criticism at the outset by avowing divorce from the realities of modern life. "The action takes places anywhere, provided that the costumes are pretty," and a prominent place in the setting is occupied by "A Wall" —evidently borrowed from the burlesque of romance in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' Percinet and Sylvette, the principal characters, are equally obviously descended from Romeo and Juliet, and to put their literary origin beyond question, when the curtain goes up they are reading and discussing together that very play. They too are kept apart—not merely by the Wall, but by parental antagonism, as they believe. As a matter of fact, their cunning fathers have set up the antagonism—and the Wall—with the express purpose of bringing about a romantic marriage which will unite the two estates. We see the fathers in friendly converse over the Wall—changed to a mock quarrel when the lovers catch sight of them—and then in an amicable arrangement with the romantic villain Straforel for an abduction from which Percinet may rescue Sylvette and bring the fathers' desires to a happy issue. Straforel is a specialist in abductions and can supply all kinds:

"There's the vulgar abduction—quite cheap—in a hack
But that is the commonest card in my pack.
There's abduction by day and abduction by night—

In a carriage and pair—you must have it just right
With footmen bewigged and well-powdered—you pay
For that extra, of course—or a simple post-chaise
Horses, two, three, four, five—just as you may command—
Musketeers, brigands, negroes—the best in the land.
A closed carriage is modest but not very bright;
You may look at a sack in a humorous light.
A boat is romantic, but calls for a lake,
I'm ready to answer all calls you may make.
Abduction by gondola needs a lagoon,
And it costs even more by the light of the moon.
Moonlight is expensive, though very refined,
But thunder and lightning may be to your mind
With stamping and sword thrusts, big hats and black cloaks.
One may do it politely, or make brutal jokes.
A torchlight abduction is excellent style
Masks, music, sedan chair—it's really worth while
Not to spare the expense, but go in for the best—
All the extras. You order—and I'll do the rest."

The delighted fathers accordingly agree to a first-class abduction with all the extras, and Straforel gets away without giving any particulars as to prices. The abduction—and the rescue—come off as planned, with musical accompaniment, and Straforel falls, rising again just before the curtain to present his bill, and resume his recumbent position.

The first act, at the end of which the fathers stage a solemn reconciliation and bless their children, is really complete in itself, and makes a very pretty little play. But obviously Rostand had to introduce greater variety, and in the second act the fathers find that the union of their estates by the removal of the Wall was not all their fancy painted it. They quarrel about the management of the garden, and cannot put up with the insufferable airs of the two lovers. Eventually one of them lets Sylvette into the secret, and though with the practical common sense of her sex she is willing to accept the situation and hide everything from Percinet—"men are so stupid"—he too learns the fatal truth by coming across Straforel's bill and Straforel himself, who calls to collect his account. The upshot is a lovers' quarrel and Percinet goes off with brandished rapier to seek real adventures by the abduction of chorus girls.

The ingenuity of Straforel, however, is not at an end. As he has been refused payment of his bill because of the rupture, he sets to work to re-establish the engagement. Disguised as a mason employed to rebuild the Wall, he reveals himself to Sylvette as the Marquis of Astafiorquercita, who has been driven to this lowly task for love of her, in order to abduct her in real earnest; but he paints the hardships of their adventurous flight with such exaggerated realism that she renounces her romantic illusions and refuses to accompany him. In the nick of time Percinet returns, thoroughly disillusioned. He has caught cold through being shut up in a wardrobe, has been thoroughly beaten by an offended husband, has had a serenade acknowledged by a dash of dirty water, and has realised that romance is only to be found in the paternal garden—with Sylvette. It was Love that gave the April night its charm—the music and torches of Straforel were false, but the stars and the roses were real. They find poetry in their own hearts—and Straforel collects his bill. The play ends conventionally with a rondeau in which the characters come to the front in turn and repeat rhyming lines, appropriate to the parts they have played in an innocent evening's entertainment.

Except in the final dialogue between Percinet and

Sylvette—which no doubt indicates the author's own point of view—romance is nowhere in the play treated seriously. As Pierre Lasserre has pointed out in an article on Rostand in 'La Minerve Française' (June 1, 1919), the play is fundamentally artificial; Sylvette and Percinet have no direct relation to life; they are the embodiments of a literary tradition. But when all this is granted, the fact remains that the play is graceful and amusing, and that it does, in the end, make a sincere plea for romantic love, not as a passion overriding the safeguards of social institutions, but as the natural efflorescence of poetic youth. Acted at the Comédie Française and awarded the Academy prize for the best play of the year, 'Les Romanesques' deserved both honours for its freshness and charm.

Rostand's next effort was more ambitious. He took a traditional romantic theme—that of Geoffrey Rudel, the medieval troubadour who fell in love with a Princess of Tripoli he had never seen, and died on the voyage to find her—and treated it seriously. In spite of the powerful aid of Sarah Bernhardt in the principal rôle, "La Princesse Lointaine' fell rather flat. Its exaggerated idealism was too far removed from reality to awake any general response. The public was ready to applaud enthusiasm, but not enthusiasm for its own sake, and the cause to which the Rudel of tradition devoted himself—the historical Rudel was a very different person—was entirely chimerical.

Still more daring was Rostand's next subject—'La Samaritaine'—the Woman of Samaria who talked with Jesus at the well,—again impersonated by Sarah Bernhardt. Rostand's identification of sacred with profane love caused offence, and his metrical versatility was thought ill-applied in the rhyming version of the Lord's Prayer, which closes the play. The attempt to mingle two diverse traditions—that of Primitive Christianity and that of Medieval Romance—was, and was bound to be, a failure on the modern stage. The appeal of the Gospel is its absolute simplicity; it was impossible to combine this with the acknowledged artifice of the Romantic Revival.

At last in 'Cyrano de Bergerac' a suitable subject was discovered and was treated with magnificent and masterly effectiveness. The traditional atmosphere was that of cloak and sword romance, which lent itself easily to dramatic presentation. Cyrano's fame as a swashbuckler and his reputation as a poet were equally useful, and his nose was a stage property which Rostand developed with extraordinary versatility and success. The ingenuity and movement of the first four acts carried everything before them, not only in Paris but all over Europe and in the United States. The last act is perhaps too French in conception to endure export, but the idea of "le panache" was characteristic of Rostand's view of life and art. He said in his Academy speech:

> "What is the Panache? It is not enough to have it to be a hero. The Panache is not greatness, but something added to greatness and stirring above it. It is something that flutters in the air, is excessive—and a trifle curled. . . . To jest in the face of danger is the highest politeness, a delicate refusal to take one's self tragically; the Panache then is the modesty of heroism, like a smile with which you excuse yourself for being sublime. Certainly heroes without the Panache are more disinterested than others, for often the Panache, in a sacrifice which one is making, is a consolation for the attitude one takes. Perhaps a little frivolous, doubtless a little theatrical, the Panache

is only a grace; but this grace is so difficult to keep in the face of death, this grace supposes so much strength—is not the wit which leaps upward the finest victory over the trembling carcass?—that, all the same, it is a grace—which I wish us all."

Extravagant gallantry in pursuit of the unattainable is the ideal which Rostand espoused and commended to an age devoted to the realities of science and material gain, and his appeal, supported in the case of 'Cyrano' with astonishing metrical versatility and the employment of every dramatic device known to romantic art, met with a genuine and widely extended response. The play still has life in it and has been often revived with success, although it is, of course, impossible for the overwhelming effect of its first production to be repeated, and the enthusiastic eulogiums pronounced upon it at the time are now seen to be exaggerated. It represents perhaps the best that can be done within the limits of the romantic convention under modern conditions. The element of artifice in the type is now so considerable that there is grave danger of its overwhelming the elements of genuine feeling and truth which alone can give it vitality. Rostand's sincerity, his theatrical inventiveness, and his unmatched power of expression gave romantic drama in 'Cyrano' the breath of life; but it did not restore to the type any permanent appeal to an age which found its natural expressions of thought and emotion in other ways.

This conclusion is borne out by Rostand's failure to repeat his one genuine and serious success. 'L'Aiglon' sustained itself for a while on the stage with the help of Bernhardt's graceful diction and Coquelin's comic verve and versatility, but it is now evident that there is no real life in it. 'Hamlet' had already been done, and it is a sad falling off from the Prince of Denmark to the Duc de Reichstadt. It is fitting that Hamlet should be borne "like a soldier" from the stage, equally fitting that the Eaglet should die to slow music, with three weeping women (all in love with him) by his bedside, while some one reads a long official account of his baptismal ceremony. No wonder an English critic (H. Hamilton Fyfe) chooses this play out of all others as a signal instance of his view that "We English people love poetry; the French, rhetoric and *la gloire*." As a matter of fact, the hollowness and artificiality of 'L'Aiglon' have been exposed by none so mercilessly as by French critics, the last example being the article on Rostand by Pierre Lasserre already referred to. The glitter of the verse, the quickly moving theatrical effects, the skill of Coquelin and Bernhardt were amply sufficient to account for such success as 'L'Aiglon' achieved in the original; what was surprising was—and is—that English versions—shorn of the magic of Rostand's verse and Bernhardt's art—should be accepted with enthusiasm by English-speaking audiences.

This is a source of even greater astonishment when we come to consider 'Chanticler.' What was it that made this play a failure in Paris, a success in the United States? The answer to the first part of the question is easy; the Parisian public had been led to expect a great deal, and it was disappointed; the American public looked not for or at a work of art, but for a sensational show, and found it what they had expected. Perhaps they were right in contenting themselves with the spectacle and the story, for if they missed a great deal of verbal ingenuity, there was far too much of it in the original. What can be made either for literary expression or dramatic effect of such a passage as the following:

"Oui, Coquards cocardés de coquilles,
Coquardeaux Coquebins, Coquelets, Cocodrilles,
Au lieu d'être coquets de vos cocoricos,
Vous rêviez d'être, ô Coqs! de drôles de cocos!
Oui, Mode! pour que d'eux tu t'emberlucoquasses,
Coquine! ils n'ont voulu, ces Coqs, qu'être cocasses!
Mais, Coquins! le cocasse exige un Nicolet!
On n'est jamais assez cocasse quand on l'est!
Mais qu'un Coq, au coccyx, ait plus que vous de ruches,
Vous passez, Cocodès, comme des coqueluches!
Mais songez que demain, Coquefredouilles! mais
Songez qu'après-demain, malgré, Coqueplumets!
Tous ces coqueluchons dont on s'emberlucoque,
Un plus cocasse Coq peut sortir d'une coque,
—Puisque le Cocassier, pour varier ses stocks,
Peut plus cocassement cocufier des Coqs!—
Et vous ne serez plus, vieux Cocâtres qu'on casse,
Que des Coqs rococos pour ce Coq plus cocasse!"

It is not the display of a great talent but the abuse of it, and the continued and prolonged abuse in the first three acts of the play is wearisome to excess. But if the English version necessarily misses much of this, it misses also the poetry of the fourth act; as it has missed Chanticler's invocation of the Light in the first act, it misses his sublime devotion to an impossible ideal at the end of the play. For in this, his last utterance on the stage (if we except the posthumous and negligible 'Dernière Nuit de Don Juan'), Rostand held fast to the romantic conception of life which was the centre of his thought.

"Who loses the Great Dream
Must die, or rise and conquer in its beam"
(H. D. Norman's Translation.)

Rostand kept to the end his faith in the ideal for its own sake, his faith in light in the midst of darkness, his faith in the destiny of man and the destiny of France. Happier than in some of his previous essays, he combined this in 'Chanticler' with devotion to the common tasks, to the obvious duties of every-day life. It is unfortunate that he overloaded this simple message with so much that was over-ingenious and even grotesque, for it is by this genuine sympathy for simple virtues and simple joys that his work will live, not by its flashy theatricalism or even by the extraordinary if somewhat superficial brilliance of his metrical versatility. This ultimately became a snare to him and put obstacles in the way of his genuine gifts. We see him at his best in the refined and graceful charm of 'Les Romanesques,' and in the more confident and heroic romance of 'Cyrano.' These appeal to Frenchmen, not because of their defects, but because of their genuine qualities, and if foreigners have sometimes admired his work for the wrong reasons, his countrymen may console themselves with the thought that that admiration was not altogether misplaced. Rostand sustained the faith of France and the faith in France, and for these achievements at home and abroad, the conscientious critic who makes many reserves in his appreciation will forgive him much and pay him a debt of sincere gratitude.

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1895 'La Princesse lointaine.'
1897 'La Samaritane.'
'Cyrano de Bergerac.'
1900 'L'Aiglon.'
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TRANSLATIONS

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ABOUT ROSTAND

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CHAPTER XIII

MAURICE MAETERLINCK (1862-)

THE extravagant praise given to Maeterlinck at the beginning of his career no doubt contributed to his immediate popularity, but it rather militated against his permanent fame. In the Paris 'Figaro' of August 24, 1890, M. Octave Mirbeau revealed to an astonished world his discovery of an "admirable and pure eternal masterpiece," a work of genius "superior in beauty to the most beautiful things in Shakespeare." This masterpiece was 'La Princesse Maleine,' of which thirty copies had been run off in 1889 on a small hand-press by the author with the help of a friend, and the author was Maurice Maeterlinck, up to that time unknown outside of a small circle of acquaintances in Ghent and Paris.

There is little Shakespearean about 'La Princesse Maleine' except what Maeterlinck has borrowed from Shakespeare; René Doumic was only exaggerating when he said that the play was made up of rags of Shakespeare. The hero, Hjalmar, is a debased Hamlet, Queen Anne a pale copy of Lady Macbeth oddly combined with Queen Gertrude, King Hjalmar a Lear who closes the tragedy by asking if there will be salad for breakfast; he has a clown, and (like Juliet) a nurse. But Maleine comes from Grimm's fairy tales, which Maeterlinck read in an English translation with illustrations by Walter

Crane. Maeterlinck had covered the walls of his study with Crane's pictures, taken from children's books, and framed under green glass. The green glass was carried over into the performance of some of these early tragedies in the form of a gauze curtain, suggesting an atmosphere removed from real life, and Maeterlinck told Huret that his intention in 'La Princesse Maleine' was to write "a play in Shakespeare's manner for a marionette theatre." He published 'Alladine et Palomides,' 'Intérieur' and 'La Mort de Tintagiles' in 1894 as "trois petits drames pour marionettes," and from the beginning he deprecated the exaggerated appreciation of 'La Princesse Maleine,' of which he said later he had "a mediocre opinion." Of 'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue' and 'Sœur Béatrice' he wrote in the preface to the collected edition of his plays: "They are, properly speaking, little *jeux de scène,* short poems of the sort unhappily called 'opéra comique,' intended to supply the musicians who had asked for them with a theme suitable for musical development. They make no higher claim, and my intentions would be misunderstood if readers were to try to find in them great moral or philosophical thoughts hidden beneath the surface." In this preface he criticized also in the earlier plays "the astonished repeating of words which gives the personages the appearance of rather deaf somnambulists for ever being shocked out of a painful dream"; and added: "This want of promptitude in hearing and replying is intimately connected with their psychology and the somewhat haggard idea they have of the universe."

The craze for the early Maeterlinck plays (it really amounted to that at the time) was obviously the fault of over-enthusiastic critics and a foolish public rather than of the author, who, it must be said, did nothing to encourage their vogue beyond writing them. It is a wonder that this early success did not ruin him, but he kept his head and went on with his work. This was the more surprising because of the comparatively narrow circle in which he had grown up. Born at Ghent and educated in the Jesuit College and the University there, he had gone to Paris in 1886, ostensibly to complete his legal education, but already firmly resolved to devote himself to literature. His friend and fellow student, Charles van Lerberghe, gives us a striking and obviously veracious account of Maeterlinck's literary beginning:

> "Maeterlinck sent me verses, sonnets principally in Hérédia's manner, but Flemish in colour, short stories something like Maupassant's, a comedy full of humour and ironical observation, and other attempts. It is characteristic that he never sent me any tragedy or epic poem, never anything bombastic or declamatory, never anything languorous or sentimental either. Neither the rhetorical nor the elegiac had any hold on him. He was a fine handsome young fellow, always riding his bicycle or rowing, the kind of student you would expect to see at Yale or Harvard. But he was a poet beside being an athlete, and his robust exterior concealed a temperament of extreme sensitiveness."

At Paris, Maeterlinck fell in with Mallarmé and other poets of the Symbolist school, which was then just beginning to attract public attention. He was concerned with some of this group in 1886 in establishing a review called 'La Pléiade'; this died after one issue in 1886, but came to life again in 1889, and was the origin of the successful and influential organ of the new movement, the 'Mercure de France,' which published several of Maeterlinck's earlier works.

Symbolism, according to one of its most sympathetic and gifted interpreters, Arthur Symons ('The Symbolist Movement in Literature,' edition of 1919), is "an attempt to spiritualise literature, to evade the old bondage of rhetoric, the old bondage of exteriority. Description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically; the regular beat of verse is broken in order that words may fly upon subtler wings." A more academic historian of the movement, Dr. André Barre ('Le Symbolisme,' 1911), analyses its tendencies under a fourfold division: (1) poetic; (2) prosodic; (3) syntactic; (4) lexicographic. The last two did not affect Maeterlinck and therefore do not here concern us. He was but slightly influenced by the attempt to reform French prosody, though he made one or two halfhearted experiments in *vers libre* in his juvenile 'Serres Chaudes' (1889). He told Huret that 'La Princesse Maleine' (which was printed in the same year) was written in *vers libres* concealed typographically as prose; but until the poet made this avowal the concealment was completely successful. In 'Douze Chansons' (1896) Maeterlinck returned to regular metrical form and left behind him the greensickness of his melancholy youth of which 'Serres Chaudes' was the fleeting expression. The second of the 'Douze Chansons' has been admirably translated by W. G. Fulford, and may be quoted as an example of Maeterlinck's command of poetic form of an exquisite simplicity:

"Et s'il revenait un jour
Que faut-il lui dire?"
"Dites-lui qu'on l'attendit
Jusqu'à s'en mourir . . ."

"Et s'il m'interroge encore
Sans me reconnaître?"
"Parlez-lui comme une sœur,
Il souffre peut-être . . ."

"Et s'il demande où vous êtes
Que faut-il répondre?"
"Donnez-lui mon anneau d'or
Sans rien lui répondre . . ."

"Et s'il veut savoir pourquoi
La salle est déserte?"
"Montrez-lui la lampe éteinte
Et la porte ouverte . . ."

"Et s'il m'interroge alors
Sur la dernière heure?"
"Dites-lui que j'ai souri
De peur qu'il ne pleure . . ."

"And if he should yet return,
What then shall I say?"
"Tell him that I watched for him
Dying day by day . . ."

"And if he, not knowing me,
Question me of you?"
"Speak him soft, it may be he
Has known sorrow too . . ."

"And if he should seek for you,
What shall I reply?"
"Give him then my golden ring,
Making no reply . . ."

"If he ask why never a step
Wakes the silent floor?"
"Show him the extinguished lamp
And the open door . . ."

"And if he should question still
Of the closing sleep?"
"Tell him—tell him—that I smiled—
Smiled—lest he should weep . . ."

'Serres Chaudes' and 'La Princesse Maleine' should be regarded as unsuccessful experiments, interesting only as juvenilia which indicate influences and tendencies. The influence of the Symbolists is unmistakable; we note their tricks of expression, their vague melancholy, their love of the mysterious, the infinite, and the "unknowable," their efforts to suggest an emotion or evoke a mood rather than to say anything direct. Maeterlinck's originality consisted in the attempt to transfer this method to drama, the most difficult field for its employment. Ibsen had used symbols in his early dramas 'Brand' (1866) and 'Peer Gynt' (1867); there is a symbolic element in 'Rosmersholm' (1886) and 'The Lady of the Sea' (1888); and his later plays, beginning with 'The Master Builder' (1892), are largely symbolic. Browning in the original preface to 'Strafford' (1837) said he wished to display "Action in character rather than Character in Action," and he wrote elsewhere, "My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study."

With the dramas of both of these poets Maeterlinck was acquainted; but what he attempted to do was something different. His theory of the "static" drama, relieved of the disturbing element of action, is best set forth by himself in 'Le Tragique Quotidien,' an essay published in 'Le Trésor des Humbles' in 1896:

> "I admire Othello, but he does not seem to me to live the august, everyday life of a Hamlet, who has the time to live because he does not act. Othello is admirably jealous. But may it not be an ancient error to think that it is at the moments when we are possessed by such a passion, or by others of equal violence, that we really live? I have come to think that an old man sitting in his arm-chair, simply waiting in the

lamplight, listening without knowing it to all the eternal laws which reign around his house, interpreting, without understanding it, all that there is in the silence of the doors and the windows and in the low voice of the light, undergoing the presence of his soul and of his destiny, inclining his head a little, without suspecting that all the powers of this world intervene and hold watch in the room like attentive servants, not knowing that the sun itself sustains the little table on which he leans his elbows over the abyss, and that there is not one star of the sky nor one power of the soul which is indifferent to the movement of an eyelid that falls or of a thought that rises—I have come to think that this motionless old man is living, in reality, with a deeper, more human, and more general life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who wins a victory, or 'the husband avenging his honour.' "

It is evident that 'La Princesse Maleine,' with its Shakespearean toll of murder and suicide, does not fill this prescription; but Maeterlinck's next play, 'L'Intruse,' does. The theme, the inevitable approach of death, was worked out by him and by his friend, Charles van Lerberghe, each in his own way, and the two dramas appeared about the same time, giving rise to inevitable accusations of plagiarism. But while van Lerberghe's drama is violent to impossibility, Maeterlinck keeps to the safe ground of everyday experience, using slight incidents which are capable of natural explanation to suggest the on-coming of inevitable doom. This and 'Intérieur,' in which the same theme is treated somewhat differently but in a similar tone and spirit, are the best examples of Maeterlinck's theory, which, as we shall see, he came afterwards to discard. They are genuine attempts to interpret the tragedy of everyday experience in humble life, and have a simple power which we do not find in his dim romantic plays with their weird lovers, who are as devoid of ordinary morality as they are of common sense. This is, no doubt, a philistine view, and it may be well to quote on the other side the opinion of Arthur Symons:

> "I do not know a more passionate love-scene than that scene in the wood beside the fountain, where Pelléas and Mélisande confess the strange burden which has come upon them. When the soul gives itself absolutely to love, all the barriers of the world are burnt away, and all its wisdom and subtlety are as incense poured on a flame. Morality, too, is burnt away, no longer exists, any more than it does for children or for God."

This was indeed Maeterlinck's own view. In the preface to 'Les Disciples à Saïs' (1895), he says, "I may commit a crime without the slightest breath stirring the tiniest flame of this fire of the soul"; and again, in the chapter on 'La Morale Mystique' ('Le Trésor des Humbles') (1896):

> "What would happen if our soul suddenly became visible and had to advance in the midst of her assembled sisters, despoiled of her veils, but charged with her most secret thoughts, and trailing behind her the most mysterious acts of her life that nothing could express? What would she blush for? What would she wish to hide? Would she, like a modest woman, cast the long mantle of her hair over the numberless sins of the flesh? She knew nothing of them, and these sins have never reached her. They were committed a thousand leagues away from her throne, and the soul of the Sodomite even would pass through the midst of the crowd without suspecting anything, and bearing in its eyes the transparent smile of a child. It had taken no part in the sin, it was pursuing its life on the side where light reigns, and it is this life alone that it will remember."

All this belongs to Maeterlinck's mysticism (which must be discussed later in connection with the essays) rather than to the Symbolic or Static Drama, of which it forms no necessary part.

'Les Aveugles' (published 1890, acted 1891), which followed 'L'Intruse,' stands on a different plane. It is not symbolic, but allegorical, if one is to accept the interpretation of it current in all the books on Maeterlinck, according to which it figures forth the blind gropings of humanity under a darkened sky towards a revealed religion which has ceased to be a leader and is now dead and cold. Its dreary pessimism offers a striking contrast to the childlike cheerfulness of 'L'Oiseau Bleu' (1908), one of the best of fairy plays,—but again sheer allegory and not symbolist at all. It does not evoke a mood or suggest emotions, but delivers its message forthright so that the children for whom it was intended can understand. It attained enormous popularity, and has since been given further vogue as an opera. Its simple charm deserved success, though it lacks the whimsicality of Barrie's 'Peter Pan' (1904), to which it was perhaps indebted. 'The Betrothal' (1918), a sequel to 'The Blue Bird,' repeated the ideas of the earlier play without adding to their charm.

It was, however, 'Mona Vanna' (1902) which devastated the supporters of the static drama. Maeterlinck returned to the dramatic traditions he had disowned—a definite time and place, stirring incident, well-defined characters—romantic melodrama, in fact, with a touch of Browning, whose 'Luria' was laid under contribution, as Maeterlinck afterwards acknowledged. The most Maeterlinckian episode in the play is at the end, when Mona Vanna, about to deceive and desert an unappreciative husband for a devoted lover, says "Le beau va commencer." This little touch of amorality rather cheered the devout Maeterlinckians, but on the whole they were baffled by their leader's sudden change of front; he became, like Browning's Wordsworth, a "lost leader."

The change has been ascribed to the influence upon Maeterlinck of Georgette Leblanc, who acted in the title rôle, and to whom 'Sagesse et Destinée' (1898) was dedicated as largely due to her collaboration. But it seems more reasonable to ascribe Maeterlinck's change of view to the natural development of his genius, aided, no doubt, by a sincere affection and continued success as an essayist and a playwright. He bought the Abbey of St. Wandrille in Normandy and translated Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' for Georgette Leblanc to act in the grounds. This was about the time of Maeterlinck's highest international fame. A comedy, 'Le Miracle de St. Antoine,' which was acted at Geneva in 1903, has as yet been published only in German; 'L'Oiseau Bleu,' afterwards to make the round of the world, had its first production at Moscow in 1908; 'Mary Magdalen' was first performed at Hamburg and Leipsic; 'Death' appeared in English in 1911, two years before its publication in French; and about the same time came the announcement that Maeterlinck had been awarded the Nobel prize for literature.

Whatever may have been its origin, the change of view indicated by 'Mona Vanna' (1902) and the essay on modern tragedy in 'Le Double Jardin' (1904) is remarkable. In the essay he abandons the static drama altogether and lays it down as an absolute principle that the essential requirement of the theatre is and always will be action.

> "When the curtain rises, the high intellectual desires we bring with us are suddenly transformed; and the thinker, the moralist, the mystic or the psychologist in us gives place to the instinctive spectator, to the man who is electrified negatively by the crowd, and who wants to see *something happen on the stage.* However strange this transformation or substitution may be, it is incontestable, it is evidently part of mob psychology, an undeniable faculty of the human soul, which is endowed with a special organ, primitive and almost unchangeable, for thinking, enjoying, and suffering emotion *en masse*."

The italics in the above extract are Maeterlinck's own and indicate how violently he had reacted from his earlier view; his latest play, 'Le Bourgmeister de Stilmonde' (1918) shows that he retained the later opinion, and in 1920 he gave himself to the devising of moving-picture dramas, of which the action is wholly external. In face of this it need not surprise us that after praising Hamlet for refraining from action in 'Le Trésor des Humbles,' and blaming him for acting at all in 'Sagesse et Destinée,' Maeterlinck in the essay just cited from 'Le Double Jardin' speaks depreciatingly of him as "indecisive, anxious, and overwhelmed by a terrible and unrealisable duty."

Such inconsistencies appear common in Maeterlinck if one pays no attention to the different moods and points of view he entertained at different times. He was never a profound or exact thinker, but he had a remarkable gift for expressing the thought or mood of the moment with an enthusiasm which for some readers takes the place of argument. He writes an easy, ample and somewhat diffuse style, rising sometimes to noble eloquence, when his imagination is warmed by an idea or an emotion, but at other times trailing off into intolerable prolixity. He is at his best in talking of his bees and flowers or the death of his favourite bulldog, though even in these fields of familiar enchantment he has a trick of sliding from fact to fancy which is exasperating for the careful and informed reader. His essays on the insect world are, of course, not to be compared for combined knowledge and literary skill with the 'Souvenirs Entomologiques' of Henri Fabre, to whom Maeterlinck pays a fervent tribute in 'Mountain Paths' (1919). Professor Dewey, in an article in the 'Hibbert Journal' (1911), spoke in high terms of Maeterlinck, more, it is true, as an artist than a philosopher, and probably Maeterlinck himself would claim credit less as an original thinker than as an interpreter of the thoughts of other men. His combination of agnosticism with mysticism was novel, and commended itself to many people who having, as they thought, sacrificed their ancient superstitions to science, were glad to find that science left possible a still ampler credulity. It would be difficult to extract any consistent Maeterlinckian system, for reasons already suggested, but the main lines of his thought are not difficult to indicate. His attitude towards Christianity was as agnostic as that of Huxley, whom he often quotes. On this issue an essay, 'L'Évolution du Mystère,' in 'Le Temple Enseveli' (1902) is central in thought as well as in date. If the faith that once sustained us is dead, and can no longer sustain itself, if we have nothing to put in its place, let us not torment ourselves. "It is better to leave a void than to put in its place a new truth in which we only half believe."

> "Yes, it is a truth, and, if you like, it is the greatest and most certain of truths that our life is nothing, that our efforts are derisory, that our existence and the existence of our planet is only a miserable accident in the history of the worlds; but it is also a truth that our life and our planet are for us the most important phenomena, and even the only important phenomena in the history of the worlds. . . . The essential thing is to attach ourselves not to the truth which is perhaps the truer from the universal point of view, but to that which is truer from the human point of view."

We should recast our morality from the point of view of evolutionary science, making it conform to the probable mission of the species—and if we were to adopt vegetarianism, it would be a moral advance "probably as important and certainly more sincere and more durable than if the Ambassador of God the Father came back a second time upon the earth to repair the errors and omissions of his first pilgrimage."

It is doubtless this frank acceptance of the conclusions of modern science (even though accompanied by a characteristic freakishness) that led Professor Dewey, in the article already mentioned, to commend Maeterlinck as "a mystic of the intelligence, not of the obscuration that fears intelligence," and to describe his mysticism as "a naturalistic, yes, if you will, a materialistic mysticism." Professor Dewey goes on to say:

> "I know no writer of our own day who accepts more frankly, who welcomes more bravely than Maeterlinck all the methods and results of the natural sciences, and without discount, and without evasion. I know of no other writer who maintains such a vivid, intimate, and persisting sense of the change wrought, and wrought for the better, in our inmost moral being by that development of naturalistic intelligence we call science."

Professor Dewey also commends Maeterlinck for his "invincible sense of the democracy of life and its experiences." Emerson, Walt Whitman and Maeterlinck "are thus far, perhaps, the only men who have been habitually and as it were instinctively aware that democracy is neither a form of government nor a social expediency, but a metaphysic of the relation of man and his experience to nature. Among these Maeterlinck has at least the advantage of greater illumination by the progress of natural science."

"Mysticism," according to Havelock Ellis, is not "a magical method of discovering objective truth, but simply an interior emotional process by which joy and harmony are attained in a new personal vision of the universe; all the rest is mere accidental accretion." If we accept this view, it is easier to understand Maeterlinck's odd combination of materialistic science with his natural inclination, as he puts it, "se laisser aller au mystère." But the combination certainly produces very strange results. In the volume from which we have just quoted ('Le Temple Enseveli') he goes on to say in the last essay ('L'Avenir'):

> "From certain points of view it is altogether incomprehensible that we do not know the future. The slightest change would probably be enough—a cerebral lobe displaced, the circumvolution of Broca oriented in a different fashion, a thin net of nerves added to those which form our consciousness—for the future to unroll itself before us with the same clearness, with the same majestic and immovable amplitude as the past reveals itself to the horizon, not only of our individual life, but even of that of the species of which we belong. It is a singular infirmity, a curious limitation of our intelligence, which makes us know what has happened to us, but not what is about to happen."

This is bizarre enough as a theoretical speculation, but Maeterlinck gave it practical effect, at a crisis of his fortunes, by going to consult the soothsayers of Paris—mediums, chiromancers, readers of cards and coffee grounds—and he gives us an elaborate account of his interview with a re-embodied spirit named "Julia," who told him that his enterprise would succeed and that his adversary would die a violent death. Neither event happened; and most people would have hastily concluded that "Julia" was a fraud. Not so Maeterlinck; his view was that "Julia" was gifted with second sight and picked out of his subconsciousness his unrealised desires.

In his more recent essays Maeterlinck has shown an increasing inclination to investigate the occult—not merely the psychic phenomena held by some to throw light on the conditions of a future life, but also the alleged evidence of pre-existence and reincarnation. He does not claim that anything has been proved, but he shows an inclination to believe not altogether consistent with the sterner scientific agnosticism of his middle period. "It seems desirable," he says, "that this revelation of the sacred books of India should be authentic."

> "Must we admit, as the occultists contend, that they come to us from beings superior to man, from more spiritual entities, living under unknown conditions, who occupied our earth or the neighbouring planets before our coming; from a Lemuro-Atlantean civilisation which, in its megalithic monuments, has left indelible traces in the memory of the peoples and on the face of our earth? It is quite possible; but here again we are free to await the confirmations of Hindu, Egyptian, Chaldean, Assyrian and Persian archæology, which on this point, as on so many others, has not spoken its last word."

Evidently this is a domain into which the ordinary critic cannot follow. These things are matters of faith rather than of evidence and argument, and we must content ourselves with recording the fact that in the winter of 1919–20 Maeterlinck and Sir Oliver Lodge (on whom Maeterlinck largely relied for his discussions of the future life in 'Mountain Paths') were both in New York, drawing enormous audiences. Only time can tell whether this marks the foundation of a new religious faith, which, if not founded on modern science, may at least be held along with it, or whether it is merely another instance of the reaction to superstitious credulity following upon an age which prided itself on its scientific spirit. It is, however, notably curious that after working through occultism Maeterlinck found his way back to agnosticism. "The Great Secret, the only secret, is that all things are secret." He interprets occultism, at the end of his last book ('The Great Secret,' 1922), as "always a protest of the human reason, faithful to its prehistoric traditions, against the arbitrary assertions and pretended revelations of the public and official religions." "We know at last that there has never been any ultra-human revelation, any direct and irrecusable message from divinity, no ineffable secret; and that all man believes himself to know of God, of His origin and His ends, he has drawn from his own powers of reason." But with this conclusion he is content:

> "Humanity has need of the infinite, with its corollary if invincible ignorance, if mankind is not to feel itself the dupe or victim of an unforgivable experiment or a blunder impossible of evasion. There was no need to call the human race into existence, but since it has been raised out of nothingness, it must needs enjoy the boundlessness of space and time of which it has been vouchsafed the conception. It has the right to participate

in all that has given it life, before it can forgive the all for bringing it into the world. And it is not able thus to participate save on the condition that it cannot understand it."

With this absolute agnosticism Maeterlinck manages to combine a cheerful acceptance of "odic emanations," —he thinks the secret quintessence of man must be "odic"—the phenomena of materialisation produced by "the celebrated Eusapia Paladino," "the externalisation of sensibility," the theory of "invincibles" (including Sir Oliver Lodge's "Raymond"), "cross correspondences," "ectoplasm," and so on. "It may be," he adds, "it may be that the time is not far distant when we shall be finally compelled to admit the existence of these disembodied entities, 'doubles,' wandering spirits, 'elementals,' 'Dzyan-Choans,' devas, cosmic spirits, which the occultists of old never doubted."

It may be; but it seems more probable that if people should be confronted with the choice between their traditional beliefs and agnosticism combined with Dzyan-Choans, they will prefer the former, which go back to a respectable antiquity, though not, of course, as far removed as the pre-historic "Lemuro-Atlantean civilisation."

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CHAPTER XIV

THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

In order to understand the development of French poetry during the last half-century, we must take a glance at its previous history. The first half of the nineteenth century was distinguished by the famous conflict between the classicists with their motto, "Nature, truth, common sense, reason," and the romanticists with the new formula, "Nature, truth, inspiration, imagination." Both started from the same basis, but the classicists subordinated imagination and feeling to reason, and the romanticists gave imagination and feeling free play in defiance of all established rules. In the hands of Lamartine, Hugo, Musset and Vigny, to name only the greatest, romanticism won for the time being a brilliant victory; but this victory was quickly followed by reaction.

THE PARNASSIANS

Gautier, once the wildest of romanticists, became the promoter of the art-for-art's-sake theory. Taking up the tradition of Chénier, he wrote antique poems and, like a sculptor, carved Greek bas-reliefs in words; but was always so absolutely master of himself that he did not move the reader. The Parnassian School, of which he was the forerunner, worshipped rhyme, rhythm, skilful technique; it may be said that its adepts paid more attention to manner than to matter. Their rebellion was chiefly against the loose workmanship of the romanticists and against the exaggerated egoism which mars much of the best romantic verse. According to the Parnassians, the poet ought to keep himself severely outside of his work, which should be absolutely free from personal emotion. Leconte de Lisle, leader of the School, reacted violently against the temperamental outbursts of the romanticist. "No one was more haughtily impersonal, more distant from his own time, more scornful of vulgar interests and circumstances," said Théophile Gautier. Although the Parnassians did not show much breath of inspiration, we owe them some perfect verse: especially the faultless sonnets of José-Maria de Hérédia and the philosophic poetry of Sully-Prudhomme; the touching stories of François Coppée and the strange poems of Baudelaire have also been put to their credit, though the latter certainly was not a true Parnassian, for his talent was altogether too personal to be encompassed within the bounds of any movement. The characteristic work of the School had the brilliance of beautifully wrought jewels, and it charmed the eye, even if it lacked life and left the heart unmoved; it must be said of all the Parnassians that they loved their art.

In prose, the reaction took the form of Naturalism, which had full sway in the novel, and had considerable influence on the drama, but did not satisfy the poets; it eliminated from literature invention, intuition, imagination. Its form was vulgar; it used "the commonplace language of sensational reporting." It democratized literature in matter and in form. Idealism, temporarily out of fashion, was not dead, and it reappeared, first in painting and sculpture, and then, probably under the influence of English and Russian masterpieces, in literature; the effect of Wagner's music also played its part, as did the spiritualistic evolution of philosophy.

THE EARLY SYMBOLISTS

Symbolism, which began to attract public attention about 1885, was a protest against the sterile impassibility of the Parnassians on the one hand, and the platitudinous brutality of Naturalism on the other. It was not, as Huysmans suggested, "a joke invented by Anatole France to vex the Parnassians"; we shall do better to take the definition of Jules Tellier, who, although he died too young to give the full measure of his talent, left us in 'Nos Poètes' one of the keenest analyses of what the first Symbolists were trying to do. "Do you know what Symbolism is?" said he. "The word is rather pompous, but the thing is very simple. To symbolize consists plainly, after one has found an image expressive of a state of the soul, in expressing not this state of the soul, but only the image that materialises it." Thus understood, Symbolism was not new in French literature; the mystic poets of the School of Lyons attempted a spiritual evolution of poetic spirit, and like their Symbolist descendants of 1885, they took all sorts of liberties with prosody and syntax. Chateaubriand and Balzac in prose, and Lamartine in verse used symbols to a very large extent, and so did Vigny, in a terse and rather dry manner peculiar to him; when André Barre said that Lamartine was the forbear of Verlaine, and Vigny of Mallarmé, he advanced an opinion which is fairly tenable. Sainte Beuve, a mediocre poet, though an excellent critic, gave us a well-worked out Symbolist theory, which, by the way, he borrowed from Diderot. Another early Symbolist was Gérard de Nerval; Baudelaire synthetized all the pre-symbolist tendencies and found in them the principle of a new æsthetic theory. He is not a distant relative, but rather the father of the new school, of which after a while he became the god. But the organization and manifestoes of the new movement naturally fell into younger hands.

There is no doubt that Parnassian poetry was considerably influenced by the worship of experimental knowledge, which Auguste Comte's positivism had brought into favour; this trend of thought, noticeable in some romanticists, exercised a real tyranny on their Naturalist successors. It is this materialism in poetry that the new School of Symbolists made their main ground of attack. It is true that Jules Laforgue's transformism, René Ghil's evolutionism, and Verhaeren's industrialism show a certain reactionary tendency towards scientific determinism, but the general trend of the movement directed by its leaders, Verlaine, Mallarmé and Rimbaud, was against the materialism associated with modern science, and toward intuitive inspiration.

THE NEW MOVEMENT

When the Symbolist movement took definite form its principles were at first discussed in literary societies, among which the best known are: Les Hydropathes, Les Hirsutes, Les Jeunes, Les Zutistes, and Les Décadents. Some had their meetings in the Latin Quarter and others at Montmartre, notably at the famous "Chat Noir."

In these coteries young poets in search of a new form of expression elaborated their formulas before expressing them in books. They founded a number of literary reviews, which lasted in many cases but a day, but nevertheless played an important part in the dissemination of Symbolism by permitting its adepts to present, to a limited public, opinions which otherwise would have remained inarticulate. 'Les Décadents' was originally the title of a review, in which A. Baju in November, 1888, described the new movement as "a group of young writers disgusted with Naturalism, who intend to renovate French poetry. They undertake to substitute for the flat, monotonous poetics of the Parnassians, moving and sonorous poetry, in which one can feel the thrill of life. They have suppressed the verbiage of the old school, to take up sensations and ideas."

The "Décadents" were soon subdivided into different groups: The Symbolists, the Romanists, the "Symbolist and Harmonist" School, the "Philosophico-Instrumentist" group, etc. But such classifications are always artificial, for many poets figured successively, or even simultaneously, in different coteries. According to the Belgian Symbolist review, 'La Wallonie,' Symbolism formed only two schools: the "Melodists," with Laforgue, Verlaine, Corbière, and Kahn, and the "Harmonists," with Emile Verhaeren, René Ghil, Stuart Merill, and Pierre Quillard. But individualism is the dominant note of Symbolism, and Adolphe Retté has very justly said: "If one should question Symbolist poets separately, one would receive as many different answers as individuals; Symbolism has never meant similarity of method, but unity of ideals." From that variety of method arose at first the misunderstanding between contemporary criticism and the new school of poetry, which was bitterly scoffed at by the great majority of the French press. Strange to say, the classic Brunetière was the first to take up the cudgels in their favour, soon followed by Jean Psichari and Anatole France. People began to realise that the Symbolists were not mere objects of contempt and derision, or "honest imbeciles," as Max Nordau called them, but earnest workers who were trying to inaugurate new æsthetics. The Naturalists considered only the external and material side of life; the Symbolists insisted that things themselves have a soul and that we must endeavour to grasp the inner correspondences which exist between ourselves and the world, which can be expressed only by symbols. The Parnassians had taken their images from the outlines, the shape of things; hence the plasticity of their verse. The Symbolists emphasized the imagery derived from colour, sound, even smell, adding thus a whole gamut of symbols, which up to that time had rarely been used. In this resides their principal originality. But, in spite of their good intentions, of their steady work, they startled the public by their exaggerations, and they would never have gained favour had not a few great poets among them forced the attention and won the admiration of their bitterest antagonists. The work of Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Moréas, and Henri de Régnier, the most brilliant representatives of a movement which, all told, had a favourable influence on French poetry, claims individual notice.

PAUL VERLAINE (1844–1896)

Verlaine, who was to become a typical Bohemian of letters, began his life as a very ordinary "petit bourgeois." When in 1867 he published his 'Poèmes Saturniens,' he gave the promise of a Parnassian poet, clever, but totally lacking in originality. In this book we find imitations of Hugo, Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle. The same remark applies to 'Les Fêtes Galantes,' published two years later. Nevertheless, a few short pieces—'Chanson d'Automne' in the first volume, 'Clair de Lune' and 'Le Faune' in the second, give us a hint of what Verlaine's poetry is to be. His third work, 'La Bonne Chanson,' is inferior. Verlaine, a petty clerk at a Paris town-hall, had just married, and undoubtedly enjoyed a certain kind of commonplace happiness; his gift of expression was dulled by material comfort. The Franco-German war of 1870 and the Commune changed all his habits. He began to loathe regular work and took to drink. Then he met Arthur Rimbaud; they became fast friends, and Verlaine gave up everything: his position, his home, his wife. The strange pair took to the road. They were regular tramps, and travelled from place to place, through England and Belgium, working little and drinking much; for one of the principles of Rimbaud was that intoxication was the mother of genius. Some critics have represented Rimbaud as a disciple of Verlaine, but nothing is further from the truth. Rimbaud was the younger of the two, but by far the most mature, and he had the greatest and most uncanny influence on his companion. He changed him morally, mentally, and artistically. Besides, we must not forget that to the very last Verlaine remained a child; as a poet he was a genius, but as a man he never grew up. In spite of their real friendship, the intercourse of the two men was stormy. The kindhearted Verlaine had uncontrollable fits of anger when under the influence of drink. In one of these fits, he quarrelled with Rimbaud; the quarrel degenerated into a brawl, Verlaine shot Rimbaud, was arrested and condemned to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. He was first incarcerated at Les Petits Carmes at Brussels and then at Mons. This catastrophe had a beneficial effect on the poet in more than one way. He resumed his work, and in 1874 published the admirable 'Romances sans Paroles,' which had been written during his wanderings, but were now put into final shape. Instead of feeling any bitterness against his friend, or against his judges, he accepted his sentence as a just punishment for his sins. A complete evolution took place in his thoughts, and, probably through a humble realisation of his unworthiness, he reverted to religious faith. The calm and monotonous prison life, after the wild and unbridled existence he had led, soothed his disordered spirit. Strange to stay, his memories of Mons were sweet; he had been happy because he had found himself. It was during this period that he began the writing of his admirable book, 'Sagesse,' which is by far his best work. It makes of him a Catholic poet, superior, at any rate in sincerity, to François Villon. Verlaine wrote his pious pieces for his own use, and they are full of an intensity of faith, of conviction, of religious passion of which there are few equals in the world's literature. Released in 1875, Verlaine returned to France, and soon resumed his erratic existence, being in turn a tutor in England, a professor in a small French college, a newspaper man in Paris, and a farmer in the Ardennes. His wife had obtained a judgment of separation against him, and he frequently lived with his mother, who to the end remained faithful to him. His experiment as a farmer ended disastrously, and he had to sell his land. He returned to Paris in 1885, and in 1886 his mother died, leaving him alone, penniless and sick. Although sincerely converted, his life henceforth was a succession of relapses into his former vices and of bitter repentances. He explained it in a touching and childish way in 'Les Poètes Maudits,' in which he calls himself "Pauvre Lélian" (an anagram of Paul Verlaine). He is always a Christian, he says, but sometimes he believes and does good, sometimes he does wrong but believes just the same. And when he repents, he believes still more intensely, he is sincere, he is ashamed of himself, and then returns to his sins. According to Jean Richepin, this contradiction was reflected in his physical appearance: when sober, his face had a childlike sweetness; when drunk, he looked like a terrible old Pan, ready to indulge in any kind of debauch. During this period of his life the Parisian littérateurs and newspaper men treated him rather badly, for they conspired, for the sake of picturesqueness, to create a legend representing him as a queer old man whose only abode was a café and whose only occupation was the drinking of absinthe. His health became worse and worse, and every winter he went to some hospital to pass the bad season. He was considered as a new François Villon raised from the dead. Like Villon, he had a following, but not for the same sinister purpose; his admirers wished him to assume the position of head of a school. But although he realised fully that he had brought something new into French poetry, although he was legitimately proud of it, he never believed those who pretended that French poetry began with him and was to end with him. He was never the dupe of the many manifestoes published in his name. He had always been profoundly sincere as a man, as a poet he was shrewd. His negligences, his apparently lax prosody were the result of set purpose and hard work. In his 'Art poètique' he explains his theories very clearly. We must not forget that at the beginning Verlaine was a Parnassian and that he had expressed with strange force, in one single line, the famous Parnassian theory of impassibility:

> "Nous qui faisons des vers émus très froidement."

His 'Art poètique,' so charming, so fluid, so free from stern rules, is very far from the Parnassian technique. It is written in lines of nine syllables, for he always preferred odd numbers, lines of seven, nine, eleven or thirteen syllables. In so doing he wished to go as far as he could from his former Parnassian stiffness; none of his new verse had the regularity that one was accustomed to find in French poetry, and this is what gives them such a peculiar and mystic charm. He claimed spontaneity, and affected to despise "literature," but, none the less, very consciously and very shrewdly, he strove in the most precise manner for effects of vagueness. A time came when he rebuked his most faithful disciples for using what he himself called his "tricks." They were going further than he wanted them to go, and they had not the lightness of touch he possessed. We witness at the end of his life a remarkable reaction, which shows us the true Verlaine imbued with an ideal of clearness and common sense characteristic of his race. It is particularly well expressed in the famous pieces which begins:

> "L'art tout d'abord doit être ou paraître sincère,
> Et clair absolûment."

"Verlaine remains as an eminently French poet," concludes the author of 'La Chanson des Gueux.' "He brought to French poetry a new set of fluid, indefinite, symbolic expressions, as well as an original prosody, facile, but very carefully worked out in its facility. He was also a popular poet, reproducing the charm of folklore, and, above all, he was one of the greatest Catholic poets that France has produced, worthy to rank with the great Corneille in his poetic translation of the 'Imitatio Christi' of Thomas à Kempis."

ARTHUR RIMBAUD (1854–1891)

Arthur Rimbaud, again to quote Jean Richepin, is "the extraordinary type of man of genius who at a certain period of his life deliberately renounces being a man of genius." This fact, which is literally true, is strange enough, but the whole life of Rimbaud is such as to make the renunciation explicable and almost justifiable. Son of an infantry captain and of a mother at the same time bourgeoise and peasant, thrifty, unbendingly honest, a strict disciplinarian, Arthur Rimbaud was a victim of wanderlust. At fifteen he ran away from home, and, although taken back to his parents, he kept on running away time after time. Paris had for him an invincible attraction. During the Commune he enlisted in the "tirailleurs de la Révolution," but succeeded in returning to his native town of Charleville without being caught by the "Versaillais."

At seventeen he was in possession of the full mastery of his art. He never learned to write verse; it was born in him. He had sent some of his poems to Verlaine, who invited him to come to Paris. In his wild enthusiasm Verlaine introduced his new friend to the literary world, to Banville, even to Victor Hugo; Rimbaud startled them all. He had already written his best poems, 'Le Buffet,' 'Le Dormeur du Val,' 'Ma Bohème,' 'Accroupissements,' the famous 'Bateau ivre.' In all his work, force and colour shone with such intensity that the old masters remained spellbound before this youth who instinctively knew all that had taken them so long to learn. More than any other, he put into practice that imagery of colour so dear to the Symbolists. 'Le Bateau ivre' and the 'Sonnet des Voyelles' are typical examples of this peculiar style. The 'Sonnet des Voyelles' begins thus:

> "A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu, voyelles."

It has aroused endless discussion. Some claim that it is a summary of Rimbaud's theory of colour expressed in words. Ernest Gaubert has proposed an explanation, far less interesting, but after all plausible. He recalls that in the old French primers the capital letters are printed in brilliant colours; he suggests that Rimbaud learned spelling in such a book, that the memories of his childhood hovered in his subconscious mind, and that when he began to write verse certain letters appeared to him with a peculiar coloration of their own.

If the Parnassians saw the external world with etcher's eyes, Rimbaud was gifted with a painter's vision; things appear to him in large masses of colour which he succeeds in reproducing in symbolic words instead of touches of a brush. At the same time he grasps his dreams not as a series of accurate and successive images, but as a broad ensemble in which all details are blurred. This gives to his poetry a savour of its own which has never been successfully imitated, because with him it was absolutely spontaneous.

After some months spent in Paris, Rimbaud and Verlaine started on their Odyssey. The least said about it, the better. During that period Rimbaud wrote 'Les Illuminations,' strange and shining visions born of a mind obscured by the fumes of alcohol. Their strange friendship was broken, as we have seen above, in 1873. Verlaine went to jail; Rimbaud, expelled from Belgium, returned home. He published 'Une Saison en Enfer,' a psychological autobiography which he immediately destroyed, save three copies kept by friends. This was the end of his career as a poet, but not of his adventures.

A soldier in the army of the Spanish pretender, Don Carlos, he deserted; he enlisted in the Dutch Army of the East Indies, deserted again, wandered through Java, shipped on an English vessel to Liverpool and made his way home. He travelled through Europe as a circus man. Then, with the help of his family, he started for Egypt and reached Abyssinia. He seems to have found there the country of his dreams, for he stayed; in turn explorer and trader, he won the confidence of the Negus and built up a large and profitable business. He was on the road to fortune when in 1891 a tumour of the knee compelled him to return to civilised life. Transported with the greatest difficulty and intense suffering to Aden and Marseilles, he died at the Hôpital de la Conception on November 10, 1891. His sister, Isabelle Rimbaud, relates that during his last days he told her what might be called his soul's history; among many details, he mentioned that when in Abyssinia he had learned that he could succeed in France as a writer and a poet, but that he rejected the idea "because it was evil."

His life, written by his brother-in-law, Paterne Berrichon, as well as his letters from Africa, throw a strange light on the psychology of this marvellously gifted man, who, restless in a civilisation ready to acclaim him, found succour and rest in the fastnesses of Africa.

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ (1842–1898)

Mallarmé belonged to a family of public officials, in which for many generations a taste for literature had been hereditary. This inclination was noticeable in him very early, and his desire for literary distinction was so intense that he forsook the family tradition of the civil service and studied English with the idea of becoming a professor. Of his professorial career there is little to say; after occupying several positions in provincial cities, he was appointed to Paris, where he remained to the day of his retirement. Like Verlaine, he began by being a Parnassian; one of his masters was Théodore de Banville, and his great admirer was Victor Hugo, who used to call him "his dear impressionistic poet." Up to 1884, although he had published a considerable number of short poems, he was practically unknown. J. K. Huysmans mentioned him in his famous novel, 'A Rebours,' the hero, Jean des Esseintes, remarking that he loved the work of Stéphane Mallarmé: "A poet who, in a century of universal suffrage, at a time of commercialism, lived apart from the world of letters, sheltered against the surrounding stupidity by his contempt for it, enjoying in his retreat his intellectual discoveries and the visions of his brain."

The young writers soon acclaimed him as a master, and a master he was to them in more ways than one; his teachings probably had a greater influence on them than his work. A number of Symbolist poets used to gather around him in his apartment in the Rue de Rome, which soon became, so to speak, the Mecca of Symbolism. There every Tuesday were to be found his early disciples: Félix Fénéon, René Ghil, Gustave Kahn, Jules Laforgue, Charles Morice, Henri de Régnier, Laurent Tailhade, Francis Vielé-Griffin; some left and others came to fill their places: Paul Claudel, André Gide, Pierre Louys, Camille Mauclair, Stuart Merrill, Adolphe Retté, Paul Valéry. Bernard Lazare, in 'Figures Contemporaines,' has given us a clear idea of his exceptional personality and influence:

> "Only those who frequented his society regularly know what a lucid and deep master of æsthetics Mallarmé was. To understand the resources of this amazingly clear mind, one must have heard his words for years. Fond recollections of the rue de Rome meetings will always hover in the memory of those whom Stéphane Mallarmé had admitted to his intimacy. In his softly lighted parlour, to which shadows gave the appearance of a temple or rather of an oratory, Mallarmé revealed himself to these faithful disciples with an infinite charm, expounding his proud and seductive doctrines on poetry, art, poetic prose, music, drama. Some time those who in their youth knew Mallarmé, loved him as one of the purest, of the most disinterested of

poets, those who heard him and cherished his word, will relate his life as Xenophon related that of Socrates. Faithfully, scrupulously, they will comment on his sonnets, line by line, with the sole aim of revealing to the young men of a future time what a noble, profound, marvellous artist Stéphane Mallarmé was."

In 1895, Mallarmé, having been pensioned as a professor, retired to his charming country house of Valvins, between the river Seine and the magnificent forest of Fontainebleau. In this beloved solitude he meant to devote all his time to poetry, but his leisure was short, for he died suddenly in September, 1898.

Of Mallarmé, Parnassian poet, there is little to say. His poems were excellent, but it is as a Symbolist that he will be remembered. According to André Barre and Albert Mockel, he was above all an intellectual. He asserted that sensation and sentiment are inferior elements of art, and that thought should be supreme. The aim of the artist is not so much to communicate his thoughts to others directly as to give them suggestions which will induce them to think or dream for themselves. His idealistic philosophy was akin to that of Berkeley. For him the material world existed only through the idea that we have of it. For the expression of his thoughts he despised the analytic process which the French generally follow because it has the advantage of presenting ideas successively and clearly. He professed to use in poetry a musical technique presenting simultaneously the principal idea, which is the melody, and the subsidiary ideas, which form the harmony. One of the most remarkable examples of this technique is the famous sonnet: "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui." This peculiar conception once admitted, it remained to write the poem, and this, for Mallarmé, had the greatest importance; for, in his opinion, "Everything in the world exists so that it can be expressed in a book." The rôle of the writer is not to describe, but to evoke, for "the enjoyment of a poem is made of the pleasure of guessing the meaning little by little; perfection lies in suggestion." He divided style into two classes: conversations and "écritures." Conversations were anything written in clear prose: newspapers, novels, scientific books. "Écritures" were characterized by literary style, which was necessarily symbolistic. In prosody rhythm was for him the primordial element. He professed to keep the old forms, but to vary them according to his fancy. For a long time he was opposed to free verse, although at the end of his life he conceived the possibility of an intermediate form between prose and verse. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to regular verse and to rhyme, at least in its essentials. But for him poetry was above all an aspect of music. A verse is a musical phrase expressed by a small orchestra, "chamber music." Mallarmé tried to realise this harmony in words, in three ways: first, by what he called "the colour of the style," which he sought to obtain by the accurate selection of words; secondly, by the variety of the rhythm, which, with him, is always very carefully diversified according to the sentiment expressed; thirdly, by syntactic innovations, and in this it must be admitted that he is more a grammarian than a poet. His principle was that the periods must be linked together not by the agreement of the words, but by the agreement of ideas; his logic is not verbal, but ideal. He uses many syntactical forms borrowed from the Greek and Latin; he has recourse to very peculiar inversions; he frequently takes words in their etymological meaning, which has long disappeared. All these peculiarities contribute to make of Mallarmé an extremely difficult author, but we must not forget that he never pretended to write for the crowd, that for him poetry was "the expression by the human tongue, brought back to its essential rhythm, of the mysterious meaning of the diverse aspects of life." For the young men of his time he was a hero, indifferent to the compromises which win success, but fully conscious of the supreme rôle allotted to the writer, and above all to the poet.

JEAN MORÉAS (1868–1910)

Jean Papadiamantopoulos, alias Jean Moréas, was the son of a Judge of the Greek Supreme Court; his ancestors had fought for Greek independence. From his youth he worshipped French literature, and he often boasted of having left in Athens, where he was born, a library of several thousand volumes which included all the French poets. After extensive travelling in Germany and Italy, he settled in Paris and began to read for law, but soon gave it up to devote all of his time to writing. His first attempts appeared in 'La Nouvelle Rive Gauche,' one of those ephemeral little sheets which used to burst out nearly every morning in Paris and die in a fortnight. After he had published 'Les Syrtes' and 'Les Cantilènes' he was hailed by Verlaine as one of the most gifted of the Symbolists and wrote in 'Le Figaro' a profession of faith explaining the poetic aims of the New School (1886). In 1891 he published 'Le Pélerin Passionné,' which was the work of a humanist, a philologist, a metrical artist as well as of a poet. All French poetry from Charles d'Orléans to Rimbaud was familiar to him; he tried to bring back into honour the old and forgotten poetic forms of the masters of the Renaissance and of the fifteenth century. In 1894 he published 'Ériphyle' and four 'Sylves' which his friends heralded as the most perfect poems written since 'Sagesse'; the style is of a fluidity and charm which made of these little poems all but masterpieces and permitted Maurras to foretell the admirable perfection of the 'Stances.' Maurras had an enormous influence on the poet's development; to their friendship may be safely traced the latter's reversion to pure classical forms, and the 'Stances' is a classic in inspiration as well as in technique. Moréas does not strive for originality. His themes are of everyday topics; his ideas, the very same which have been sung by Homer, Virgil, La Fontaine, but also the ideas of a man of the twentieth century. Like the classics, he does not seek the exceptional, but what men hold in common. These simple themes are expressed with such force, such loftiness, such subtle balance that we find in his work all the charm, the everlasting youth of the true classics. This masterpiece of a Greek had fulfilled the aim of the 'École Romane' which was to prove that the themes and technique of the classics were still worthy of admiration. In 1904 Moréas produced 'Iphigénie' at the Odéon, a classic drama worthy of the 'Stances.'

Four different periods may be discerned in his life work. First of all, he was a Symbolist. His theories were expressed in various manifestoes and newspaper articles, collected under the title of 'Les Premières Armes du Symbolisme' (1889). For him concrete facts have "poétiquement" no existence; they are mere appearances behind which are shown the ideas. These ideas must never be expressed in plain words under their abstract form, but only in symbols derived from concrete phenomena which our senses can perceive. The mode of expression of the classicists or even of the romanticists is inadequate for such symbolistic expression; hence the necessity of a new language independent of all former rules. The verse must be rejuvenated and metric forms must be as diverse as our ideas. But it never occurred to Moréas that he could get rid entirely of the old rules. He never went as far as "vers libre"; what he wanted was "vers libéré." In 'Les Syrtes' the symbols are easy to understand and few in number. In 'Les Cantilènes' he went much further in that direction, but in neither are found the peculiar forms which he recommends in his manifestoes. His greatest originality as to prosody is the constant use of odd numbers—nine or eleven syllables. After all, he uses the old technique, but freer, lighter, more subtle in its effects. In his first manifesto he urged a reversion to the language, vocabulary and forms of the ancient poets, but it was merely with the idea that the French ought to make use of all the wealth of their literature. This leads us to his second period, that of the first part of the 'Pélerin Passionné,' in the preface of which he insists more earnestly on the necessity of coming back to these forms: "I think that since the end of the sixteenth century our language has been impoverished, dessiccated, and fettered." He wants to revert to Malherbe, to adapt the prosody and vocabulary of the poets of the Malherbe period to the needs and taste of his contemporaries, to recreate "the communion of the French middle ages and of the French Renaissance fused and transfigured in the principles of the modern soul." The 'Pélerin Passionné,' which represents what has been called his conversion to the middle ages, is the work of a consummate artist in prosody; he uses with the most astounding cleverness all metric forms from assonance and blank verse to the regular alexandrine. At the same time, it becomes more and more apparent that Moréas has never really assimilated symbolistic philosophy, but that he remains content with an adroit reform of language and poetics. It is worthy of note that he alone among the Symbolists attempted that reform and succeeded, at least, in attracting serious attention to this phase of the movement.

Classicism had for him an unconquerable lure, which, however, he himself did not yet fully realise. The Symbolist movement was tending more and more toward mystery, dream, abstruse expression, and this hurt deeply his instinctive love for logic, clearness, light; the affected pessimism borrowed from the nebulous northern literatures grated on the optimism of this son of Greece; the time came (that of his third period) when he was ready to disown his first work, even the first half of the 'Pélerin.' "In my opinion my real work in this book begins at the page where the romance influence is felt." From now on his aim was to reject all German vagueness and pessimism and to imitate "the men of the middle ages and the Renaissance, the true sons and grandsons of the Latins and of the Greeks." It is then that he founded "L'École Romane" with Charles Maurras, Raymond de la Tailhède, Ernest Raymond, and Maurice du

Plessis; but this did not satisfy the attraction he felt for true classicism and, after years of thought and inner struggle, he came out as a genuine classicist in 'Les Stances,' one of the most perfect poems of modern times, and characteristic of his fourth period. "I have abandoned free verse, realising that its effects are purely material and its liberties illusory. Traditional prosody has more nobility, more stability, although permitting infinite variety in the rhythm of the thoughts and of the feelings; but one must be a trained craftsman." Thus Jean Moréas, said a French critic, "succeeded in one of the most extraordinary manifestations of a poetic soul that France has seen in years and years."

HENRI DE RÉGNIER (1864–)

Henri de Régnier wrote his first poem when he was at the Collège Stanislas and barely fifteen; his professor declared it simply grotesque. After his graduation in 1883 he studied law, and, to please his family, passed the examination for the diplomatic service, but he soon gave up the thought of official life to devote all his efforts to letters. His first verse appeared in an obscure review called 'Lutèce,' under the pen name of "Hugues Vignix," a kind of monogram of Hugo and Vigny.

Stéphane Mallarmé at that time was famous in a mysterious way. Idolized by an obscure coterie of young artists of the pen, he was a demi-god to his admirers. Régnier became one of the most faithful habitués of the Tuesday meetings at Mallarmé's rooms, where he met the élite of the Symbolist school. His intercourse with Mallarmé, Verlaine, Vielé-Griffin, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Stuart Merrill, Jean Moréas, and Gustave Kahn had the greatest influence on his early artistic development; there is a truly Mallarmean inspiration in his first book, 'Les Lendemains' (1885). But the publication of 'Sites,' 'Épisodes,' and principally 'Jeux Rustiques et Divins' demonstrated the originality of his work. In 1896 Henri de Régnier married Marie de Hérédia, daughter of the famous Parnassian poet, who later on, under the pen name of Gérard d'Houville, published remarkable novels and excellent verse. This connection had undoubtedly a considerable influence on the poet's literary career.

In full possession of the technique of his art, and using with an equal mastery alexandrine and free verse, Régnier entered upon a period of intense production. Poetry was not enough for such a tireless worker, and beside his verse, he has published some thirty volumes of criticism, essays, short stories, but principally novels. In all may be found the same elegance of style, brilliant imagination, mysterious fancy, vivid evocation of the past, which characterize his poetry. Some of his short stories are masterpieces, ranking with the best Maupassant has ever written; in a general way they might be considered as a transition between his poetry and his novels; but rhythmic prose is not to be found in them; the author is too clever a craftsman not to understand that each genre has its own technique. His novels might be divided into two classes (1) those which have the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for their settings and (2) those of the present day. In both, the style matches the subject. The language of the modern novels is terse, the sentences short, the description bare of details; the author shows an objective psychological skill in the concise presentation of subtle traits which could hardly be expected in a poet. The so-called historical novels are perhaps the best. They are absolutely free from all pedantic show of knowledge, so frequent in books of that kind; there are no references to dates, no obvious peculiarities of vocabulary, no artificial colour. The reader feels that he is in the seventeenth or the eighteenth century because the personages think, speak, act as we know people of that period would have done. The style itself is of the time; the atmosphere is so true that one is inclined to look at the title page in order to ascertain the date of publication.

As a poet, Henri de Régnier is before all a poet's poet; at first his verse was not appreciated by the public at large, which admired him only when the unstinted praise of the littérateurs had proved that it was the proper thing to do. But he loved his profession as the early artists loved theirs; for him, writing was not a means of expression,—it was an end; lack of appreciation did not deter him. Too deeply intelligent not to feel that the brilliant fabric of his verse needed some solid background of thought, he never went as far as some of his Symbolist rivals who were content to produce harmonious but meaningless combinations of words.

His poetical work has been arbitrarily divided into three periods; in the first, his individuality is not complete; the second is marked by an original and strangely artistic use of free verse, as in 'Jeux Rustiques et Divins.' As a matter of fact, he is one of the best free verse writers the French Symbolist school has given us and it is much to be regretted that he abandoned that form of prosody, in which he excelled, and which appears to be his natural gift, to revert to a technique more or less borrowed from the Parnassians. In this, the influence of José-Maria de Hérédia, the author of 'Les Trophées,' is obvious. In the third period, that of 'La Sandale Ailée' and 'Le Miroir des Heures,' Régnier's form becomes more and more classic. This was inevitable, for, by heredity, nature, training and taste, he is a classic. Still, from his association with the "vers-libristes," he gained a freedom, a flexibility in the handling of his rhymes and rhythms, which make of what an American critic has called his "lawless alexandrine" an instrument of expression of the highest order, in some ways superior to its classical ancestor.

As to the general trend of his poems, we can but repeat what Amy Lowell has said in her excellent study of his work in 'Six French Poets'; "Henri de Régnier is the poet of sadness, of gentle melancholy. He is also the poet of the nude. He almost attains the chaste and cool treatment of Greek statues. Probably it is the similarity of point of view which makes him so often choose mythological subjects. His attitude is not Greek in the historical and pedantic meaning of that term. It is rather the attitude of certain of our English poets in treating classical subjects, Beaumont and Fletcher in the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' for instance, or Keats in 'Endymion' or 'The Grecian Urn.' "

He is inclined towards a pantheistic conception of the universe, or rather, as Havelock Ellis has very well said, a naturalistic pantheism of which we find some trace in Maurice de Guérin, with whom he has, on one side, some affinity. But to seek in his work a solution of the problems which now perplex our modern world would be useless; Henri de Régnier is a dreamer, a poet, an artist;

his aim is simply to create beauty for the consolation of his fellow man, "for the form, perfume, and beauty of things are the only recollections which bring no suffering with them."

VERS LIBRE

The question of "vers libre" is intimately connected with the Symbolist movement, for Symbolist writers were the first in modern times to use it more or less consistently, although not generally. The subject is involved in some difficulty, for the theorists who have endeavoured to codify the fundamental principles of free verse are divided on nearly every point except that rhythm is the corner stone of the system. We may set aside the assumption that nothing deserves the name of free verse which submits to any rule at all. Moreover, a clear distinction must be made between what the French call "vers libéré," used, according to some, by La Fontaine in his Fables, and what the French call "vers libre." "Vers libéré" is based on the syllabic system in the same way, though not to the same extent, as any regular poetry; a certain freedom is permitted as regards the elision of the e mute, the "enjambement," the hiatus; the rules of the rhyme for the eye, of the alternation of feminine and masculine rhyme, or of the singular and plural, are not necessarily observed; different metres may be used together without any symmetrical arrangement. "Vers libre," on the other hand, as our sometime colleague, Dr. Mathurin Dondo, now of the University of California, has pointed out in an excellent thesis on the subject, is built, not according to the syllabic system, but according to the foot system, the word foot being used in the English sense of a unit of rhythm. Various inventors of this latter system of versification have been suggested, from Baudelaire to Gustave Kahn, but the truth is that a number of Symbolist poets worked at the same period in the same direction. Moreover, Victor Hugo had already dislocated the alexandrine and thrown overboard nearly all rules except those concerning rhyme and the conventional number of syllables; in spite of all he stuck to the "vers de douze syllabes." Verlaine discarded the last restrictions, keeping the appearance of syllabism only in print. He admitted that rhythm depended on arrangement of feet and not on numeration of syllables. But he and all his fellow poets agreed that rhythm was indispensable, as the following quotations show: "Pour qu'il y ait vers, il faut qu'il y ait rythme" —Verlaine; "désormais comme toujours, mais consciemment libre cette fois, le poète obéira au rythme personnel"—Vielé-Griffin; "qu'importe le nombre du vers si le rythme est beau"—Henri de Régnier; "le seul guide du poète est le rythme"—Adolphe Retté; "c'est ce mouvement intérieur et profond qui fournira au poète le rythme de ses vers"—Émile Verhaeren.

"Vers libre," says Dondo, "means for these poets emancipation from the tyranny of rhyme, deliverance of the foot system from syllabic bondage, freedom for the poet to follow the impulse of his own personal rhythm, freedom also to choose all the means at his disposal to enhance the beauty of his verse; rhymes in any combination, assonance, alliteration, repetition, or no rhyme at all. As he is writing for the ear and not for the eye, the question of the hiatus disappears."

All are emphatic in declaring that the unique law of their verse is rhythm, personal rhythm engendered by the nature of their emotions. But that rhythm is widely different from the one found in English and German poetry, which follows the accentual system: the rules of German and English "free verse" cannot be applied to French "vers libre." Both English and German words have a strong stress which is invariable or at least subject to little variation, while the French tonic accent is weak and changes considerably according to the general tone of the sentence. If one pronounces the same French sentence trying to convey in turn impressions of fear, surprise or anger, the accentuation will show wide differences, but these accents, different for each passion, will be the same in different individuals for the expression of the same passion. This is what Gustave Kahn calls "l'accent d'impulsion"; it determines the rhythm of the whole stanza, the harmony of the strophe; and the strophe cannot have any fixed form, as it varies according to the feelings expressed.

A very large number of Symbolist or contemporary writers adopted this form of poetry: Gustave Kahn, who codified the rules of "vers libre" as he understood them; Jules Laforgue, the poet of the subconscious, who used in turn all metric forms (including the classic alexandrine), and any language, even slang; Vielé-Griffin, a Virginian by birth, whose rhythmic short lines are intensely original; Stuart Merrill, Édouard Dujardin, Adolphe Retté and Henri de Régnier, the eclectic, who gave us some of the best "vers libre" ever written, along with excellent Parnassian and classic verse. Others deserve study from the technical point of view: among the more recent, Jules Romains, for his peculiar poems in assonance; Paul Fort, "prince of poets," who cleverly deceived the uninitiated by making them admire as "vers libre" nearly regular syllabic alexandrines printed as prose; Frank Nohain, who allied keen wit to a clever technique; Guillaume Apollinaire, whose typographical fancies could not conceal his remarkable poetic gifts; Henri Ghéon, whose 'Foi en la France' (Nouvelle Revue Française, July 1, 1910) offered some extremely curious examples of "rythmes strophiques."

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CHAPTER XV

CONTEMPORARY POETRY

"DURING the first years of the twentieth century anarchy reigns among the poets. The 'Neo-Mallarmistes' fall into abstruse complications, and the last Parnassians into sociological fustian; in the first camp Henry Hertz, Charles Vildrac, and Guy Lavaud emerge and give promise of better things; in the second, Fernand Gregh, and above all the great Verhaeren avoid triviality by the beauty of their symbols. Maurice Magre and Charles Dormier follow in their footsteps. Charles Beauduin, Jules Romains, Jules Leroux, Émile Lante make laudable efforts to give the wings of Pegasus to the sociological ass," to quote Florian-Parmentier.

Lacuzon's theory of "emotional knowledge" and Bergson's intuitionism may reasonably be associated with the important step from rationalist poetry to intuitive poetry. Early in the century poets agreed on a sort of negation of materialism; some go as far as to dispute the concrete reality of the external world, the inner world of sensations, thoughts, images, emotions, existing alone for them. They endeavour to realise a broad synthesis of Parnassian naturalism with symbolistic and impressionistic idealism, idealism being the dominant note.

From the point of view of technique, some of the lyric poets, Paul Claudel, Paul Fort, Han Ryner, André Suarès, more or less give up verse for rhythmic prose or something very much akin to it. Others adopt free verse or even blank verse. It does not mean that traditional poetry was dying out; on the contrary, an interesting movement of reaction in its favour was started before the War by the followers of Jean Moréas and Charles Maurras, very inaccurately called the "Neo-Classicists." Their success was intensified by the War in proportion to the increasing influence of the "Action Française" group. In reality it goes deeper than mere form, for it is another phase of the eternal struggle between those who try to find lessons for the present in the experience of the past and those who seek inspiration in the dreams they form of the future.

The War interrupted the productivity of many poets and brought the careers of some to an untimely end, but it made little change in general poetic tendencies. Poetic activity is now divided among the young men who were too young to take a very active part in the War, the men whom age kept away from the front, and the survivors of the intermediate generation, men between thirty and forty. It was from this generation that France would naturally have expected the best immediate work, since a writer usually begins to produce the best that is in him between his thirtieth and fortieth year. Many of these gave their lives for their country in the flower of their manhood and poetic productivity: Péguy, Jean-Marc Bernard, Lionel des Rieux, Guillaume Apollinaire, Émile Despax, André Lafon, to mention only a few.

The work of the survivors shows pre-war tendencies still prevailing. The struggle between the Ancients and the Moderns, the traditionalists and the radicals, continues. Two great names recognised by both parties still dominate poetry, Baudelaire and Verlaine, principally Baudelaire. The growing reverence paid to his name, his life and his influence by successive poets for nearly half a century culminated in 1917, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death, in a new edition of his works and numberless articles, which established his fame beyond dispute. All the modern poets are indebted to him, from Jean Moréas and Charles Guérin to Paul Claudel, Madame de Noailles and Jean-Marc Bernard, though all have not admired him for the same reasons. His Parnassian contemporaries noticed in him only the faithful Parnassian co-worker. His first imitators, Arthur Rimbaud among others, were influenced only by his exaggeration and his debauch of imagination, which, later on, contributed to the popularity of Maurice Rollinat and Jean Richepin. The Symbolists honoured him as the great harbinger of musical poetry and as the inventor of a system of poetics founded on the fusion of sensations, on the connection between the mind and the senses, between the visible and the invisible world. Before them, the generation from Bourget to Barrès, which had been brought up according to the principles of Taine and of Stendhal, admired in the poet of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' his perspicacity, his deep knowledge of the soul, of the most secret places of the heart. Their esteem was founded on reasons exactly contrary to those of the Symbolists; the art of Baudelaire, admired as analytical by the former, was admired as synthetical by the latter. On the other hand the religious poets (so numerous in

France since Verlaine's 'Sagesse' brought again into favour subjects taken from Catholic dogma and morals) love in Baudelaire a virile elder brother, Jansenist and sinner, of the "Pauvre Lélian." Both Baudelaire and Verlaine returned to the mystic tradition of the middle ages, both gave, as of old, to the lust of the flesh, not the charming and deceiving form of Aphrodite, but the sulphurous colour of sin. Finally, the poets who proceed from the classic masters and their discipline, those who grouped themselves around Moréas and Charles Maurras, consider Baudelaire, in spite of his romanticism and of his excesses, a continuer of the masters of 1660, of Boileau, whose Alexandrine verse he most often uses, but still more, of Racine, whose most subtle characters he reproduces in a subdued manner—Phèdre is a pagan sister of "Les Femmes Damnées." From Baudelaire's technique these so-called neo-classicists took over the word which alludes instead of defining, and, with it, his imagery and his rapidity of transition. In one way or another, Baudelaire has influenced nearly all the poets of the last half-century; they do not imitate him, but study him to gain a certain elliptic and mysterious turn of expression, which differentiates their work from the anterior schools of poetry. There are a few exceptions—Rostand, Léo Larguier, Joachim, Gasquet—who have not felt Baudelaire's influence at all, but they appear as laggards, to be classed with the contemporaries of Hugo in his old age, with Banville or Catulle Mendès.

Verlaine's influence has not radiated so far. His sway on the poets converted to religious faith has been already pointed out. It is through him that French poetry has once for all rid itself of oratorical redundancy, of the tyranny of the "rime pour l'œil" (rhyme for the eye), and that it has learned anew the preeminence of the ear, the importance of flexibility of rhythm, and also recovered the priceless gift of "fantaisie," which is neither wit, as Musset or the writers of the eighteenth century used it, nor the fireworks of Rostand, but a certain freedom of sentiment, an impulsive vivacity, a smile. "Fantaisie" had been banished from French poetry after La Fontaine; Verlaine restored it; Francis Jammes was its continuer in southern France, and Paul Fort in and about Paris. Beside Verlaine, who was unanimously admired, Mallarmé and Rimbaud, on whom many people still disagree, exercised on some contemporaries a preponderant influence; Rimbaud on Paul Claudel, Mallarmé on Paul Valéry; but these poets, in spite of their genius, remain isolated because they were not able to comply with the genius of the language and French poetical tradition.

So Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé have exercised in various ways and degrees a profound influence on French contemporary poetry; but it is a remarkable fact that the strict Symbolists, who proceed from the same masters, enjoy very limited credit among the younger generation; very few would proclaim themselves disciples of Henri de Régnier (the poet, not the novelist), of Vielé-Griffin, Gustave Kahn, Maeterlinck (the poet of the 'Serres Chaudes'), Stuart Merrill, or René Ghil.

Albert Samain (1858–1900) is still highly regarded. His technique is a clever mixture of Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Verlaine and Mallarmé (Parnassian manner). It attracts the public at large, which believes that the last word of refinement is to evoke in a misty atmosphere, loaded with heavy perfume, women who, in hieratic attitudes, are wasting away from desire. Such is the tone of 'Au Jardin de l'Infante,' in which one breathes at every page a fragrance of the boudoir. Some of his elegies, harmonious and fluid, as well as some sketches of this Græco-Alexandrian period, so dear to the Parnassians and to the novelist and poet Pierre Louys ('Astarté,' 1891), are of a far better design. But even Samain has few followers among the young poets.

Another noteworthy disciple of the Symbolists is Émile Verhaeren (1855–1916) whose mesmerizing genius, full of hallucinations, has found admirers and imitators. Jean Moréas was originally a Symbolist, but he abandoned symbolism in 1891, when he founded the "École Romane" with Charles Maurras; it is as a neo-latin that he played a large part in French literature. On the whole, the Symbolist school has not had a destiny equal to its lofty ambitions. It set out to rejuvenate the technique as well as the inspiration of poetry; fate decided otherwise. The best of its disciples, Rimbaud and Laforgue, died without keeping the promise of their youth, Rimbaud in 1891, Laforgue in 1887. Toward 1895 Henri de Régnier aroused the greatest expectations; the poet of 'Les Jeux Rustiques et Divins' won the public ear with his supple and fluid free verse, which, however, was still characterized by a sculptor's or graver's picturesqueness; this taste for plasticity, stimulated without doubt by the companionship of his father-in-law, José Maria de Hérédia, author of 'Les Trophées,' prevailed over his musical sentiment, and 'Les Médailles d'Argile' (1900) is rather Parnassian; 'La Sandale Ailée' (1906) and 'Le Miroir des Heures' (1910) show a strong tendency towards classicism. His case is not unique; Albert Samain did not start with "vers libre," but from 'Aux Jardins de l'Infante' to 'Le Chariot d'Or' he followed very much the same course. Thus was created a pseudo-symbolism, a tail of the Parnassian movement, which in spite of the talent of its protagonists was bound to bring about a reaction against its conventionality and affectation.

FRANCIS JAMMES (1868–)

The first poet who marked this reaction was Francis Jammes. Born at Tournay, on the slopes of the Pyrenees, he first studied at Pau and at Bordeaux. His grandfather was a physician at La Guadeloupe, in the West Indies; ruined by the earthquake of La Pointe-à-Pitre, he died shortly after. His father, born at La Pointe-à-Pitre, was sent very young to aunts who lived at Orthez and later at Bordeaux. After his death, his wife and his son Francis settled again at Orthez, where the poet (who started in life as a solicitor's clerk) married and where he is still living. These biographical details explain the love of Jammes for "The Islands" (the French West Indies) and for the conventional settings where handsome and romantic creoles, surrounded by faithful darkies, live in "décors" of "Restoration" or "Louis Philippe" furniture. He is fond of all that suggests to the French colonial adventure—old naval maps, engravings of ships and tropical scenery and romantic and exotic novels like 'Paul et Virginie' or even 'Robinson Crusoe.'

Jammes is a poet of intense sensitiveness. His first booklets, which he entitled simply 'Vers,' and which used to appear regularly at Orthez from 1892, revealed rare qualities of freshness, fluidity, keenness and novelty of vision. His first collections of poems published in book form in 1898, 'De l'Angelus de l'Aube à l'Angelus du Soir,' gained for him the admiration of the élite, if not of the public at large. Just as Verlaine had given the last blow to the original Parnassian group, Francis Jammes, with his rustic reed, sang the dirge of the revived Parnassianism of 1895–1900. He led us back to nature, though a nature seen through his own eyes. He was like the shepherds of Virgil or of Mistral, more poet than peasant. There is nothing in him that recalls the simple but uncouth grandeur of the true son of the soil. His feelings are rather those of a city man, of a bourgeois, hunter and collector of plants, who has studied and worked in town, but has written of the fields because he loved them; what the French called, in the olden times, "an amateur of gardens." He professes to be a rustic poet, but his admiration for the country and the forests, for the herd and the flock, is tinged with irony; the real rustic has no undercurrent of thought, his love is free from arrière-pensée. Like François Coppée, but in verse far more easy and supple, Jammes lends his voice to the weak, the poor, the suffering, the deserted, the ne'er-do-wells; he takes interest in the smallest detail of their existence; he welcomes the mangy dogs and the asses. This pity for animals, though scarcely a rustic trait (for a peasant, hard on himself, will not be moved by the sight of an ill-treated donkey), is in good taste and never falls into over-sensitiveness. Finally, Jammes observes nature with a vision always new. The epithets he gives to plants, birds, seasons, make us see, or rather feel, them in an unexpected way. Jammes knew well that the Parnassian tricks were out of date and that the tyranny of the "visual" was over, to be compensated for by the other senses; so he adopted the olfactory images of Baudelaire, the aural images of Verlaine; he invented images derived from the sense of touch. This impressionistic sleight of hand, however, was sometimes tinged with "préciosité" and even affectation, although he gave us in 'La Jeune Fille Nue' charming impressions of a wet forest at night, recalling passages of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

Irony, pity, sensuousness,—is anything else needed to make an elegiac poet? Jammes has written elegies which may be placed among the most charming productions of French poetry in this kind. They are found in 'Le Deuil des Primevères.' Jammes as an elegiac poet is an exquisite "bonhomme," though he often breathes a communicable ardour of passion. The themes of his elegies are to be found in the magazines of over-sweetened romanticism of 1840–1850; family anecdotes from "The Islands," evocations of romantic school girls, of passionate young women, of rustic lady-loves (Madame de Warrens). At the end of 'Le Deuil de Primevères' one is rather startled to find fourteen prayers, more droll than pious, in turn tender and ironic: 'Prayer to go to paradise with the asses,' 'Prayer that a child should not die,' etc. Is it mere literature or sincere religious feeling? At any rate, Jammes, having formed a friendship with Paul Claudel, was converted four years after to the Catholic religion, like Verlaine, whom he calls his elder brother. This conversion, or rather, this reversion to the traditional faith of his forbears, was deep and sincere. Since then the attitude of the poet has not changed, but from the purely literary standpoint his poetry has lost something by a new restraint. Possibly out of religious scruple, he seems to keep in check his frank sensuousness, his spontaneity, that naïveté of expression which is the best of his genius.

'Clairières dans le Ciel' is a book of lyrics inspired by his first religious fervour, and dedicated to the Catholic mystics, Eugénie and Maurice de Guérin. Then he tried his hand at a long rustic and Christian poem, 'Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes,' which was a failure in spite of its beauty in detail; it is a recast of another rustic poem, shorter, but much superior—'Jean de Noarrien' (published in 1902 in 'Le Triomphe de la Vie'). 'La Vierge et les Sonnets,' in spite of a somewhat Parnassian tone, recalls by its freshness the Jammes of the period before his conversion. In his return to nature as well as in his reversion to the Catholic religion, Jammes has exercised a considerable influence on the direction of French contemporary poetry.

LOUIS MERCIER (1870–   )

Another Catholic poet, who is a true rustic, a peasant even, son of peasants, without the high style and lofty sentiments of masters of pastoral poetry, but a great poet all the same, is Louis Mercier. He was born at Contouvre, a small village some sixty miles northwest of Lyons. After spending his childhood there, he studied at the Seminary of St. Jodart, and later on, at the Faculty of Letters of the Catholic University at Lyons, where his intellectual adviser, so to speak, was the great scholar Louis Aguettant. Then he went back to his native village and divided his life between Contouvre and Roanne, a small city of the neighbourhood. His first verse, 'L'Enchantée,' was only fair, the influence of Hugo, the Parnassians, Baudelaire, and the Symbolists being altogether too obvious. He found his way in 'Les Voix de la Terre et du Temps.' We find here an intimate sense of the peasant spirit, new in French poetry, in which peasants in fact have little place. French Literature has been formed in the salons of Paris, where peasants are an object of pleasantry or of astonishment. The dramatists of the eighteenth century made of them colourless pastoral types. In the nineteenth century they were over-idealized by Georges Sand, vilified by Zola, described carefully, but only from the exterior, by Maupassant; none of these authors seems to have understood their real character. A native pride, a religious spirit, a patriarchal and almost Roman sedateness, a familiar harshness, a distrust of the stranger—such are the traits which characterize the peasant of the highlands west of Lyons, a country where Rome and the spirit of Rome, united to the inner nature of the Celt, have dug a furrow that centuries and revolutions have not succeeded in levelling. "Sian Gau Rouman e gentilome—," "We are Gallo-Romans and gentlemen," has well said Mistral. 'Le Poème de la Maison,' the masterpiece of Mercier, is the poetic expression of the character of the peasant. It appears as a kind of transposition on the poetic and Christian plane of the 'Cité Antique' of Fustel de Coulanges. The august hearthstone, the table, the bed, the Christ on the crucifix, the baking-day, the cellar where the wine is kept, the well, even the clock and the lamp, all these familiar witnesses of human actions are what Mercier sings with the greatest love. Very humble themes! But the poet is never more at ease than in the midst of the everyday objects which are the companions and the servants of the peasant. Their very humbleness is the source of their grandeur, and the poet bestows upon them a preeminent dignity in making us feel by their contact the perpetual presence of the dead, his ancestors. In the same spirit, he shows us the wheat field endowed with nobility and a truly religious purity (see the admirable poem 'Le Four'). These lyrics are truly Catholic in the broadest meaning of the word, and one might even say liturgic.

Mercier has not depicted his peasants according to narrow realist prescriptions. The soul of the peasant is at once simple and subtle. The insignificant facts of everyday life are of great value to him, but, at the same time, he has little concern for abstract or even general ideas. In stressing these daily realities, Mercier has treated from the point of view of a peasant themes which belong to all. Hence his poetry rings true and acquires universal value. He tried his hand at philosophic poetry in 'Lazare le Ressuscité,' in which the problem of the after-life is considered with real sympathy, but his style has not sufficient elevation for such a subject. He wrote some beautiful war poems—'Les Poèmes de la Tranchée.' Having sung the house of men, in 'Les Pierres Sacrées' he sings the house of God, as it is sung by the men of the field. He had given life to the most humble object of the home; his inspiration is just as lofty when he tries to animate the stones of the House of God; he makes them live, associating them intimately with the deep life of nature; his broad, natural poetry is in perfect tune with the Catholic liturgy, which never despises anything, the seasons, the earth, the everyday activities of man. We find in this poem a mixture of realism and mysticism moving in the extreme, not only for religious minds, but for all. From the French Academy Mercier received the "Prix Louis Vittet" for the whole of his work, which is held in high esteem for its artistic qualities by many who do not share his religious views.

PAUL CLAUDEL (1868–)

The same qualities, realism and mysticism, characterize the work of Paul Claudel. Paul Claudel has aroused the most passionate discussions and has been the object of admiration and reprobation, both carried to extremes. Born in Champagne at Villeneuve-sur-Fère, he studied in Paris at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, where he had Léon Daudet as a schoolmate. For a time he moved in Symbolist circles, and was a habitué of Mallarmé's famous Tuesdays. Then he entered the Consular Service, being sent successively to China, the United States, Germany and Italy; during the War he obtained the diplomatic appointment of Minister to Brazil and afterwards to Denmark; at the time of writing he is ambassador to Japan. His life's most portentous event was his conversion in his youth, when he was but twenty.

Claudel is a lofty and enigmatic figure. Mentally he is a man of mystery. Few writers have felt the physical world as intensely as he. His style, not only peculiar, but strange, has been called "palpable," because it renders things in themselves and not merely their abstract outline. In comparison, the sensualism of Jammes might be considered a sort of idealism. Claudel's soul is, so to speak, immersed in the universe, pervious to its influences, in constant and intimate communion with it. It is an extraordinary case of poetic materialism. This is new in French letters. The romanticist used to project his ego on nature; he loved nature through himself. Claudel loves nature for its own sake, because he sees in it a magnificent work of God.

Like Jammes, a poet of nature, Claudel does not give much care to details; he rather gives an impression of the "ensemble." He broadens every point of view because in everything he considers the connections and relations with the whole; in this whole he carefully marks the place of man. He could accurately invert the famous sentence of Amiel's "un paysage est un état de l'âme" and say:—"L'âme est un état du paysage, du milieu." Taine had discovered it long ago, but never expressed it with Claudel's fulness. His soul is open to all the influences of the external world, to the pressure of its unconscious forces. All things coexist in the world, all are bound together by unbreakable ties, all dovetail; nothing is left to chance. In the same way, in the spiritual world souls are interdependent. But there is no bulkhead, no tight partition between the spiritual and the material; an intimate connection exists between them. The world of matter, the order of which is carefully fixed, accomplishes in honour of its Creator an immense liturgy; it shows signs that the spiritual world tries to decipher and considers man as a sublime and brutal paraphrase of its destiny. (See the Fourth Ode of 'La Maison Fermée.')

Thus the poet incorporates the material world into the spiritual world and embraces the "immense gamut of creation." But these symbols do not suffice to the poet, who wishes to discover the great secret of nature; he digs into reality to grasp its foundations. Things which seem commonplace to the eye dulled by habit appear always new and lovable to him. The romanticists were thirsty of infinity and novelty. He is satisfied to question the finite, to derive from it the notion of the infinite. The finite is mysterious enough! That things *are* is already the greatest of mysteries.

These mysteries of the material and of the spiritual world were revealed to him; he went to the very bottom of things; he "felt the pulse of Being." This revelation came to him at Notre-Dame de Paris on a Christmas night. "Suddenly," he writes, in the story of his conversion, "my heart was touched, and I believed; God exists, he is there. It is somebody, a Being as personal as myself." From this unexpected revelation of God he took his great ode 'Magnificat'; from his contemplation of the Being, his hymns of the 'Holy Sacrament' and of 'Pentecost.' Such is the matter of Claudel's lyric works between 1913 and 1916.

It must be admitted that his poems appear abstruse to the average reader. Moreover, the author has taken pains to make them more obscure through peculiarities of style and prosody. He has adopted a verse which sometimes recalls that of the Psalms and sometimes that of Walt Whitman. His style is terse and dense. His thought is synthetical as that of Pindar, and this goes against the French genius, which is above all analytical. The masters that he professes to follow are also exceptional; in the nineteenth century he sees only Baudelaire and Rimbaud. He considers Rimbaud (a synthetic genius like himself) as his initiator, as the one who revealed to him his vocation as a poet and his conversion as a Catholic. It is from Rimbaud that he has borrowed the admirable idea of the eternal youth of the Universe and the desire to keep always a new and fresh vision. The danger of this idea is, beside a perpetual research for what is exceptional, a contempt for all that is traditional, which he also shares with Rimbaud.

CHARLES PÉGUY (1873–1914)

In Charles Péguy we find this taste for the primitive tempered by sound common sense. Like Louis Mercier, Péguy was a peasant's son. Born in Orléans in 1873, he studied at the Ste. Barbe College in Paris and in 1894 was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure, but he left after two years and founded the "Librairie Socialiste." In 1900 he began editing 'Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine' which continued to the beginning of the War. He was killed at the head of his company at the Marne on September 5, 1914. It was only during the last four years of his life that Péguy published verse, although his previous work in prose shows a poetic temperament. His poems are the lyric illustration of the ideas which were to bring about the renaissance of his country. Péguy played a prominent part in the evolution of French thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. He held for a time socialist opinions and became a follower and even a friend of Jean Jaurès. But these theories soon appeared to him empty Utopias; he broke from his former associates and went in quest of a creed which would satisfy (as he said) his common sense; this he found in tradition. By rather slow stages he realised his personality as a peasant, son of peasants, as a French peasant, hence a Nationalist, as a Catholic, for the Catholic faith had been the succour of his long line of ancestors. It is Bergson's philosophy which brought about his double conversion to Nationalism and to Christianity.

From the literary standpoint, Péguy broke the bonds of thought crystallized in everyday language and strove to reach the primordial, in which one might grasp the living and ever-changing soul. Thus, as in Claudel, may be explained his peculiar syntax, which attempts to show us the thought at its inception, then growing, advancing slowly, correcting itself ceaselessly, always turning back towards its starting point before progressing further. It is extremely curious to watch the intelligence in its work of gestation, but nothing is more contrary to French taste than to open to the reader the inner working of one's mind, though sometimes these repetitions do not lack a certain grandeur. Some friendly critics have endeavoured to assimilate Péguy's prose to a musical development in which the theme is repeated, expressed in major, in minor, in various movements, amplified, then summed up. Unfortunately, the laws of prose are not those of music and such a transposition is a sort of barbarism. It is in this weird style that he wrote 'Les Mystères de Jeanne d'Arc' which seem to come from the middle ages, from the humble soul of a peasant, full of genius, faith and good nature, speaking the language of the lowly. Two years before the war, Péguy tried his hand at regular verse; but his longest work, 'Eve,' an immense rhapsody, written in stanzas, as well as 'La Présentation de la Beauce à Notre Dame de Chartres' and 'Prière pour nous autres Charnels' present the same faulty syntax as his prose.

Jammes, Mercier, Claudel, Péguy, are the four protagonists—for Mercier and Claudel, geniuses would be a fairly accurate expression—of the religious revival in France, characterized by realism and mysticism. All, with different temperaments, draw the matter of their verse from the same realities, whether temporal or spiritual. All shun symbolistic idealism, although none has openly repudiated the technique of Symbolism. Claudel is the one who has remained the most closely connected with the movement of 1885. It has even been said that he was the greatest of the Symbolists; if there is truth in this affirmation, it evidently does not refer to the matter of his writings, but only to the form. What will be their influence on French poetry? If the revival among the French intellectuals continues and if thomist philosophy is regarded with favour in literary circles, the prestige of these poets, whose realism and mysticism may easily be linked with thomist teachings, will last. But their works are open to severe criticism as regards the form; their style is far from perfect. Mercier, from this point of view, is vastly superior to the other three; for so long as French literature keeps its hold on classical tradition, the position of Claudel and Péguy will be contested.

DISCIPLES OF MALLARMÉ

All the Catholic poets do not belong to the realist school. Louis Le Cardonnel is a partisan of symbolistic idealism, an esoteric disciple of Mallarmé. Born in Valence in 1862, he took holy orders in 1894, studied in the French Seminary in Rome, and in 1900 entered as a novice the Benedictine Monastery of Ligugé, but his health could not stand the austerity of cloistered life and he went to live in a retreat at Assisi. Since then he has travelled extensively in Italy. Le Cardonnel has, like his friend Mallarmé, conceived such a high ideal of poetry that his work is nearly inaccessible. Both worship the tools of the poet; Mallarmé, simpler, sings the inkstand, the pen, the bookcase; Le Cardonnel, the lyre. Like Mallarmé, he elects to praise poets, Orpheus or Tennyson, for instance, rather than to take from life a subject for himself; he prefers to the song the attitude of the singer, or the quality of his voice. He is an idealist, in the sense that he places the power of doing a thing above the act itself, but he does not exaggerate this peculiar attitude, and he avoids obscurity. His 'Carmina Sacra,' Christian and Platonic poems, are full of pathos. The talent of Le Cardonnel seems to be the offspring of a harmonious union between Latin and Celtic genius.

Another disciple of Mallarmé is Paul Valéry (born in Cette in 1872). Paul Valéry is endowed with the greatest poetic gift and would be probably one of the first poets of his generation, had he published more, or maybe, written more, for we know very little of his work. In 1917 he gave to the public 'La Jeune Parque.' He had produced nothing since 1895; in the meantime he had undertaken very curious researches in æsthetics, trying to use in poetry the methods that Leonardo da Vinci had used in painting. His 'Odes' have a noble style, but are rather difficult to understand. Valéry has borrowed from his master, Mallarmé, his peculiar vocabulary and also his syntax, but his poetry is far more substantial than that of Mallarmé or that of Le Cardonnel.

Guy Lavaud proceeds from Mallarmé also, but his elegies, 'Des Fleurs, Pourquoi?' (1910), full of charming descriptions of nature, have been undoubtedly influenced by the rustic movement inspired by Francis Jammes, the Jammes of the period before his conversion.

FOLLOWERS OF JAMMES

Among other disciples of Jammes, in his first manner, should be mentioned Charles Guérin (1873–1907). Born in Lunéville of a family of big manufacturers, Guérin studied in Nancy and then travelled extensively in Europe. He formed a friendship with Francis Jammes, whose poetry had on him a decisive influence. He published in 1898 'Le Cœur Solitaire,' a book of elegies which revealed a sensitive, voluptuous and passionate temperament, but full of anxiety amidst pleasure; like Baudelaire, he had the consciousness of sin. This anxiety and the despair into which it throws noble souls inspired him to write 'Le Semeur de Cendres,' his masterpiece, in which the futility of pleasure is described with a simple and moving pathos, and in which the regret for lost faith is expressed in the most thrilling accents. Later, anxious to acquire a more perfect form, he wrote 'L'Homme Intérieur.' He had just spent many months in Paris with Moréas, and the peerless verse of the 'Stances' had roused in him noble emulation; but less skilled in expression than his new master, in spite of the most profound study of the classics, particularly Chénier, he lacked the time necessary to find a style equal to his elegiac inspiration, for he died of heart failure in 1907.

THE POETESSES

The best disciple of Jammes (first period) is La Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles (1876–). In 1898 Jammes was practically unknown outside of literary circles; it was Madame de Noailles who, in the opinion of the public, initiated the reaction against Symbolism. Madame de Noailles and Gérard d'Houville (Madame Henri de Régnier) appeared as the poets called upon to take the place of those whose names were found in anthologies or in almanacs—Sully-Prudhomme or François Coppée. Their works were published by the very fashionable firm of Calmann-Lévy and were printed in 'La Revue des Deux Mondes' while Jammes had to be content with exclusively literary reviews of a limited circulation, such as 'Le Mercure de France,' 'La Revue Blanche' and 'L'Ermitage.' The applause which welcomed the appearance of these gifted poetesses was due in large part to their sex and their brilliant social connections, but their work was welcomed also as a reaction against Symbolism. People at last found again poets writing in easy French and expressing ideas common to average humanity. Some time later, in 1903, Émile Faguet, who never ceased to scoff at the Symbolists, discovered another woman writer, Madame Hélène Picard (b. 1878), who received a prize from the French Academy in 1907; many others followed. This paramount influence exercised by women is a new fact. One would have to go back to the French Renaissance to Louise Labé and the

Lyons School of the Sixteenth Century to find a woman enjoying a poetic reputation comparable to that of Madame de Noailles. All these women seem to ignore Symbolism; they proceed directly from the great romanticists of 1830 and from Baudelaire, whose supersensitiveness they have inherited; from Verlaine they got the inclination to express sensations and impressions rather than sentiments. They went very far in this "goût de la chair," which Maurras denounces in all romanticists, Chateaubriand more than the others. In imitation of Jammes, they emphasized and exaggerated the charm of the senses. It was the reaction against symbolistic idealism, against the tame sensuousness of Samain and of Rodenbach. Their heroines were more often bacchantes than nuns.

La Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles (née Brancovan) is of Greek and Roumanian ancestry. She has written the most beautiful feminine poems of this century. She brings everything back to herself; everything in the whole universe is there for her enjoyment; she celebrates the brooks, the breezes, the flowers, even the most humble vegetables, so much so that she has been called the Muse of the Garden. With an easy eloquence, which recalls that of Musset, she sings the joy of life, she pursues love and voluptuousness with a sort of frenzy, but she is haunted by the idea of death; her youth, her beauty will pass, and this fear is the theme of some of her most passionate lines.

Madame Gérard d'Houville, born in 1875, the daughter of the Parnassian poet, José-Maria de Hérédia, keeps her feelings in better check. She is not a prey to the terror of death. The thought that she will grow old inspires her with verse of a haughty resignation. She is the author of the famous distich:—

> "Le rameur qui m'a pris l'obole du passage
> Et qui jamais ne parle aux ombres qu'il conduit."

She ignores self-pity, and her pieces, often sad, are marked by a stoicism of the most virile and noble tone:—

> "Ne vous plaignez pas trop de la douleur divine;
> Ceux-là qui sont heureux, ils n'ont pas existé."

What she laments is the loss of neither beauty nor even love, but something more subtle, more calm: tenderness.

> "Mais non ce n'est pas vous, grâce de ma jeunesse,
> Ni vous, O liberté, rêve de mon cœur fier,
> Que je verrai s'enfuir dans un sanglot amer,
> Mais vous, mais vous! ô chère et divine tendresse!"

It is of her that Maurice Barrès said in his 'Discours de Réception' at the Academy, "José-Maria de Hérédia has left to us an immortal masterpiece and a remarkable family of artists in which under the features of a young girl we all believe we see Poetry itself." It is much to be regretted that such a gifted poetess has not given us more of her talent.

Madame Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (born 1880) is intoxicated with the joy of purely physical life; all her æsthetics consist in voluptuousness. She cannot imagine any other form of life than the life of the senses, and according to her, women are at once more sensual and less human than men:—

> "Nous sommes plus que vous de la race des fauves,
> . . . .
> Vous êtes trop humains pour nous trop animales."

But as Charles Maurras said:— "Elle parle bizarre comme d'autres parlent français." Her originality of thought and of style make her work interesting, but it is marred by affectation and by what strikes one as an incomplete knowledge of the French vocabulary.

It is customary to describe these women poets as pagans, but this is unjust to paganism, at any rate so far as it is identified with classical poetry. Some of the chastest heroines have been bequeathed to us by Athens and Rome. We find many poets who follow the lead of the ancients, and who have nothing in common either with Madame de Noailles or with Madame Delarue-Mardrus; if the latter had to seek for masters in antiquity, it would be among the Orientals or in Alexandria that they would find them, and not in Athens. Moreover, they do not discard anything, but assimilate everything, from Sappho to Ronsard and Verlaine, on the sole condition that it offers an occasion to feel and enjoy intensely.

RECENT SCHOOLS OF POETRY

Jammes never desired to pose as a chief of a School and always disowned the disciples who tagged after him in spite of himself; but it was undoubtedly under his influence that the "Naturist" School was formed in 1897. The manifesto which appeared in 'Le Figaro' expressed no new idea:—"We will sing," said the author, "the noble feasts of man. For the splendour of this spectacle we will call up to the stars and the wind. A literature is coming which will glorify the sailors, the ploughman born of the womb of the earth, and the shepherds who live with the eagles. The poets will mix again with the people." This bombast was summed up in one word—"Naturisme,"—a rather felicitous neologism because it condenses in one word the reaction against Symbolism initiated by Jammes; but, at the same time, it was too vague, too open to various and even contradictory interpretations to be permanently useful. Shortly after this outburst, its author, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, published 'Égle' ou les Concerts Champêtres,' and it may be inferred that the manifesto was little more than a clever advance notice.

Naturist also is Maurice Magre, born at Toulouse in 1877, a fervent admirer of Jammes and Madame de Noailles. His purpose is "to wrest from modern life what beauty it still contains." His 'Chanson des Hommes,' 'Montée aux Enfers,' 'Les Lèvres et le Secret' are filled with artless emotion.

Joachim Gasquet (died 1921) has much in common with the Naturists, although his oratorical poetry is derived from the romantics, and neither Jammes nor Madame de Noailles ever had any influence on his talent. He treats with fluent eloquence such trite ideas as Divine Providence, the family and the home. To a well-trained eye, his love for Hugo, Banville and Gautier is obvious. His war book, 'Les Hymnes,' betrays clearly his romantic affiliation and an out-of-date technique, but is at the same time modern, in that it shows a leaning towards the unanimism of Jules Romains, who is very far from sharing Gasquet's theories on the world, men and politics. Collective poetry, poetry of the forum, these 'Hymnes' express the thought of the crowd moved by the horrible or glorious aspects of the War; they lend a soul to the material world, to the fields, the trees, the stars, thus associated with the fate of men, very much in the same way as the antique chorus supported the characters of the tragedy.

Gasquet might have written the manifesto of humanism had not Fernand Gregh (b. 1873) assumed the task. It appeared in 'Le Figaro' in 1902: "We wish to realise a human poetry after the too strictly artistic poetry of the Parnassians or the too obscurely abstract poetry of Symbolism. . . . We must revert to the admirable Pléiade, which, forsaking the allegories of the Middle Ages and going back to the art of antiquity, source of all beauty, has discovered again humanity under the humanities. Through the Pléiade, humanism links us to antiquity on one side and to André Chenier and Romanticism on the other, for we are the true traditionalists." The work of Fernand Gregh is not equal to the loftiness of his proclamation. Nevertheless, his declarations are important and aroused a good deal of interest at the time; Saint-Georges de Bouhélier answered it in terms as pompous as the manifesto of 1897, but no more enlightening. Fernand Gregh is a brilliant poet who interested a large section of the public.

THE NEO-CLASSICISTS

At the time Fernand Gregh proposed humanism to his contemporaries as a poetic ideal, his dream was already a fact. In 1899 the first and the second book of Jean Moréas, 'Stances,' had been published in the 'Bibliothèque Artistique et Littéraire.' Outside of the circle of the "École Romane" they were known only to a few poets and artists. But in 1901 the third, fourth, fifth and sixth books appeared in 'La Plume.' The six books, gathered in a single volume, were published only in 1905 in 'La Plume' and in 1906 in the 'Mercure de France'; this is the great book of humanism, and one of the greatest lyrical achievements of the time.

The "École Romane" produced little and had but a handful of devotees, but its influence was great among the writers of the new generation, either directly or indirectly. The reaction which took place at this time, against Symbolism, emanated from two groups of poets. Some had never belonged to the Symbolist school, strictly speaking; others had played an important rôle in it. Jammes and Madame de Noailles wrote spontaneously without any preconceived theory; they were popular and enjoyed prestige and influence; the work of their followers who led the revolt from Symbolism to Naturism (which was an exaggeration of Jammes's mannerisms) gave little to French poetry, for bombast, préciosité and exaggeration marred their writings as it had that of many of the Symbolists. On the other hand, the reaction headed by Moréas was intentional and had been carefully thought out. It did not interest the general public at all, but it penetrated slowly among the world of letters. Many writers benefited by the lessons of "L'École Romane"; it taught them the paramount value of taste, measure, balance, harmony, the danger of overdoing symbolistic idealism, of making sentiment subservient to sensations, the crudeness of passionate sensuality, which are all almost unavoidable consequences of the impressionism of Jammes as well as of the poetic materialism of Claudel.

The influence of the theories of Maurras and Moréas on a very large group of young French authors is obvious. The young men gathered around 'La Revue Critique des Idées et des Livres,' 'Le Divan,' 'Les Guêpes' (before the War) forsook the too facile attractions of what they considered the deceiving beauty of Romanticism; they strove for the beauty of the ensemble and not for a felicitous expression or a clever trait; they insisted that between two images the author must select the best because there is only one best. For these reasons they admired Lamartine in his 'Premières Méditations' or in his poem 'La Vigne et la Maison'; they praised Baudelaire and loved Verlaine; but they were bitter against Victor Hugo, whom they reproached for his lack of taste, for his verbosity and also for the fact that his popularity is based, for many, not on literature, but on politics; they rejected Leconte de Lisle and nearly all the Parnassians who made of the musical and fluid Alexandrine verse of Racine and Chénier a sort of mechanical instrument. They blamed the Symbolists for having disjointed the Alexandrine to the point of destroying all rhythm. With regard to subjects, they admit all; but they profess to use a language understandable and clear to anyone and insist on a strict and faultless technique.

Have they been true to these high ideals? It is still too early to answer that question. The late Jean-Marc Bernard, killed in action on the Somme in July, 1915, gave the greatest promise. Born in 1881, after beginning a business career he settled in a small country-town near Lyons and at twenty-four decided to devote his life to letters. He published 'La Mort de Narcisse' and 'L'Homme et le Sphinx,' which attracted considerable attention; then a curious book, 'Pages Politiques des Poètes Français.' In 1910 he founded, with his friend Raoul Monier, 'Les Guêpes,' which lasted but two years. In this little review they waged a relentless war against all those tainted with Romanticism and Symbolism. This campaign drew to them young writers sharing their views and their crusade had a perceptible effect on the works of many. In 1913 Bernard published 'Sub Tegmine Fagi,' in which love, cruel or light, is depicted with a charm which recalls Horace rather than Virgil, although his descriptions of country are quite Virgilian.

FREE VERSE AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On the opposite side to these poets, we find a large group of writers of various and often totally divergent tendencies, but who have certain principles in common. They refuse to admit that the influence of Symbolism is dying out; for them, free verse is the future form of poetic expression, and by free verse they mean any sentence, devoid not only of rhyme but even of rhythm. They are in communion with Rimbaud's vision of the world, with Claudel's primitivism, with Jammes's impressionism, but they possess neither the genius of Rimbaud nor the healthy intellect of Claudel nor the keen wit of Jammes. For them, traditional poetry and classic rules are hopelessly obsolete; an evolution of poetic forms is fated, and they hope for the advent of new poetics now in the making.

Such creeds are worthy of deep respect when they are honest creeds backed up by honest deeds. Unfortunately, these extremists seem too prone to replace hard work by mere eccentricity; they are divided into a number of coteries, and each one claims to be in possession of the only and absolute truth; men of great talent have been found and are still found among them, but the most talented after a while generally revert to the old forms. So, taking it for granted that many of their ideas may be feasible, and may, as Symbolism and impressionism did, produce beautiful works and eventually have a favourable influence on French poetry, this remains a mere hypothesis and cannot be accounted a reality until they have produced something in justification of their eccentricity, which, at the present time, is the only thing that attracts the attention of the public.

These coteries are so numerous that a complete list is well nigh impossible. Impulsionism was founded in 1904 by Florian-Parmentier; neo-romanticism in 1905 by André Joussan; unanimism in 1908 by Jules Romains; futurism in 1909 by Marinetti; opposed by the primitism of Tonny-Lérys. Han Ryner founded subjecturism; Louis Mazzi, sincerism; Charles de St. Cyr, intensism; Max Jacob, druidism; Barjun, dramatism and simultaneism; Nicolas Beauduin, paroxysm; the painter François Picabia, dadaism. The common characteristic of all these isms is absolute contempt for syntax and the traditions of the French language.

Unanimism, supported by the indispensable and remarkable talent of Jules Romains, whose real name is Louis Farigoule, is one of the most interesting and probably the most inhuman of these theories. Unanimism consists in taking consciousness in one's own self, but outside and separately from that self, of the conscious and subconscious life of the groups in which the individual is merged. The evolution of man considered as an individual being at an end and henceforth negligible, the only interest resides in the groups which must now absorb and annihilate all individuality and usher in "a new animal series." Poetry must celebrate groups, and individuals only as cells of the groups. This is synthesis pushed to its most extreme, not to say absurd, limits; it is a return to the "totemic tribe" or, according to the reader's sympathies, a progress towards the Soviet.

Jean Cocteau (1891–) might be placed according to schools between Marinetti's futurism and Picabia's dadaism, but he has a personal distinction which lifts him above the fads of the moment. Whether he discusses general æsthetics, music, pictorial art, or literature, he shows insight and intelligence, and he has a keen sense of irony; one hopes that these qualities may enable him to free himself from the poseurs who surround him and produce something really original and worth while.

THE INDEPENDENTS

Between the modernists and the traditionalists some authors stand out who have borrowed from both sides and have refused to be identified with any. Paul Fort, who holds the title of "prince of French poets," is a charming fantasist, thoroughly French; his poems, cleverly shaded, recall popular songs, folk lore and the minor poets of the seventeenth century, Tristan L'Hermite or Théophile. In spite of the typographical peculiarities of his books, he is, after all, almost a classic with more freedom and less correctness than Moréas. He has published twenty-nine volumes of 'Ballades françaises' during the last fifteen years.

Guillaume Apollinaire (of Polish ancestry) was born in 1880 and died in 1918 of an illness contracted at the front, where he served in the Air Corps. He left some remarkable verse of a very wide range of form and inspiration. His 'Bestiaire,' on one hand, and his 'Alcools' and 'Calligrammes,' on the other, show the two very different faces of his talent; through one he is rather akin to the classicism of Moréas, through the other to the wildest eccentricities of Marinetti's futurism.

Adrien Mithouard (1864–1918), former President of the Municipal Council of Paris, is an agreeable poet who has remained strongly bound to Symbolism and at times is inclined to affectation and "préciosité." Profoundly attached to his native province, "Ile-de-France,"—the territory round Paris—he saw in it the seat of occidental culture and sang it with moving enthusiasm. He founded the review, 'L'Occident.'

Several other names ought to be mentioned: André Salmon ('Féeries'), Fagus ('Danse Macabre'), Pierre Drieu de la Rochelle ('Interrogation'), Georges Duhamel ('Compagnons'), Charles Vildrac ('Le Livre d'Amour'), Henri Franck ('La Danse devant l'Arche'), André Spire ('Le Secret'), Max Jacob ('Cinématoma'), Léon-Paul Fargue ('Pour la Musique'), Tristan Klingsor ('Filles Fleurs'), Edouard Jozanion ('Chansons pour celle qui n'est pas venue'), Émile Cottinet ('Livre lyrique et sentimental'), Paul Moraud ('Lampes à Arc'), Henry Céard ('Sonnets de Guerre'), Paul Géraldy ('Toi et Moi'), Valéry Larbaud, Fernand Divoire, Guy Charles Cros, Roger Allard, the noble classic Auguste Angelier (1854–1911), and the "incomparable" Paul-Jean Toulet.

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CHAPTER XVI

CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

Between the Romantic drama of Hugo and our time, three men affected the fashioning of modern standards of dramatic art: Eugène Scribe, Émile Augier and Alexandre Dumas Fils.

Eugène Scribe was an extremely prolific author; he wrote more than four hundred plays or, rather, contributed to their creation, for he had no less than forty-eight collaborators. A poor writer, an inferior psychologist, he was gifted with a natural instinct for the stage, of which he knew every trick. One of his favourite pastimes was to take up a play which had fallen flat, rebuild it and make a huge success of it, thanks to his clever manipulation of the intrigue and the help of his phenomenal popularity. It is now fashionable to profess contempt for Scribe, but the writers of comedy who have not been affected by his work are few. The great dramatic critic, Francisque Sarcey, was for a long time one of the faithful followers of Scribe, but, influenced by the revolutionary movement taking place around him, he was also one of the first to scoff at what he called Scribism. The Scribe tradition was kept on the stage by Victorien Sardou (1831–1908) in numerous comedies and melodramas which were loudly acclaimed, and the Scribe technique is still a force in the modern theatre.

Émile Augier, after some attempts at tragedy, devoted all his efforts to the comedy of manners, for the comedy of character seemed to have disappeared. From the start he was an open adversary of romanticism, which he blamed for its eulogy of unbridled passion. Augier made the morality of his plays as sound as he could; his themes are modern, and his method realistic, but his plays are free from the gross brutalities of the Zola School. His characters are forcefully drawn, especially the villains and rascals, who are intensely alive; his heroes are rather conventional and often unattractive. His verse is awkward and heavy, but his prose is virile and, in more than one way, classic. His talent has been often exaggerated, but he gave an important lead to the future orientation of the French stage.

Alexandre Dumas fils had a far greater influence on French drama, for he affected not only the manner but the matter. First of all, he is a realist, and he is also the father of the "pièce à thèse" or problem play as we understand it today. His first important work, 'La Dame aux Camélias,' on a purely romantic theme, is not a romantic play, and henceforth (except in 'Diane de Lys') subject, action, plot, stage setting, everything in his theatre is realistic. But from 'Les Idées de Madame Aubray,' the realist gives way to the moralist. Henceforth Dumas studies social and moral problems; he is a champion of the family, most particularly of women, who were in his opinion sacrificed by man-made laws, and his morality is based on the single standard. The force of the dialogue, the rapidity of the action, the clearness of the development, contribute to make of his problem plays dramas of the highest order. Sometimes the author, to prove his thesis, has to intervene too obviously, the characters are so evidently types that they lose life and reality; but these are faults of the problem play rather than of any particular author. Dumas believed in the mission of the playwright, and his moral, social and dramatic theories were clear and definite, almost mathematical. He has set them forth in the remarkable prefaces written for the edition of his 'Théâtre,' which no student of the French stage can afford to ignore.

But many authors objected to the principles which make of the stage a kind of pulpit; they objected also to the obvious cleverness of plots, composed with the aim not of giving an image of life, but of proving the author's thesis; truth was for them artistically far more important than morality. The aim of the playwright was, in their view, not to uplift his audience, but to show life as it is.

Henry Becque crystallized this movement. He is considered by many as one of the greatest playwrights of the nineteenth century. The arch enemy of the "comédie d'intrigue," the interest of which consists in complication and cleverness of plot, he made plays which are accurate representations of life; his subjects as well as his technique are of extreme simplicity. He refused to make any concession to the public taste of his time and ignored the conventions then in vogue, his audacity was equal to his intelligence, and he sacrificed success and fortune to his ideals. His dramas, 'Michel Pauper,' 'Les Corbeaux,' and 'La Parisienne,' in turn caused storms of protest. But posterity seems inclined to give him the rank he justly deserves—that of a master of the stage, the forerunner of a school which found its more complete expression in the Théâtre Libre, the influence of which is still felt in dramatic art in France and, indeed, all the world over.

LE THÉÂTRE LIBRE

It is curious that at the time when the naturalistic novel gained an overwhelming success, the plays built according to the same formula were unsuccessful on the stage; the applause went to the 'Francillon' of Dumas fils, the 'Valérie' of Scribe, 'Le Lion Amoureux' of Ponsard, 'La Comtesse Sarah' of Georges Ohnet. Among the first successful comedies which opened the way, comedies without intrigue or plot in which life was represented exactly as it is, we might mention 'Un Conseil Judiciaire,' by Moinaux and Bisson, and 'Tailleur pour Dames,' the first attempt of Georges Feydeau. Their success did not open the eyes of the directors of theatres who were still imbued with the Scribe or the Dumas principles.

Among the more remote ancestors of the Théâtre Libre, besides Henry Becque, should be counted certain authors of very different trends of thought, who all tried to introduce life and truth into their plays; Honoré de Balzac, an indifferent dramatist, but after all the real father of the contemporary movement in dramatic art; Alfred de Musset; Erckmann-Chatrian, authors of 'L'Ami Fritz'; Zola, author of 'Thérèse Raquin.' The literary coterie which gathered around Rodolphe Salis at the famous Black Cat cabaret had also an influence on its foundation.

The first representation of the Théâtre Libre, called "trial representation," was given on March 30, 1887, and it included a Prologue in verse by Arthur Byl; 'Jacques

Damour,' a one-act play in prose, adapted from Zola by Léon Hennique, and 'La Cocarde,' a one-act comedy in prose by Jules Vidal. The second "trial representation," on May 20, 1887, gave a good idea of the absolute eclecticism of the director. It consisted of the famous 'Nuit Bergamasque' by Émile Bergerat, three acts in verse, and 'En Famille,' a horror play in one act by Oscar Méténier. The first home of the Théâtre Libre was the small Élysée des Beaux Arts; later on they moved to the "Montparnasse," but not for long. During five years from October 19, 1888, to June 13, 1893, they were at the "Menus-Plaisirs." This was the time of their greatest success. In April, 1894, Antoine, discouraged by the failure of the plays of Björnson and of Gerhardt Hauptmann, resigned and Larochelle became director, and on April 27, 1896, the old Théâtre Libre expired. The Théâtre Libre never gave daily representations, but about eight different performances every season. Thus they offered to the public 124 plays by 114 authors, 69 of whom had never been seen on the stage before. In his excellent book on the Théâtre Libre, Adolphe Thalasso gives several lists which are more enlightening than discussion by the signification of the names they include. He considers Jean Julien, Gaston Salandri, Henry Céard, Georges Ancey, Léon Hennique, François de Curel, Georges Courteline, Eugène Brieux, Oscar Méténier as the masters of the Théâtre Libre, the authors who evolved the laws of the new æsthetics, which Jean Aicard, Jean Ajalbert, Maurice Barrès, Maurice Boniface, Rodolphe Darzens, Lucien Descaves, Émile Fabre, Albert Guinon, Henri Lavedan, Georges de Porto-Riche, Pierre Wolf applied, and, so to speak, consecrated. The following foreign authors were presented for the first time in France at the Thèâtre Libre: Björnson, Hauptmann, Heijermans, Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Tourgueneff, Verga. One of the causes of the ultimate failure of the Théâtre Libre is, according to Thalasso, the peculiar conception of Antoine himself, in judging plays from the point of view of the actor rather than the point of view of the audience. Acting was a passion with him, and though at the beginning he produced impartially all possible genres, he very soon realised that his greatest success as an actor lay in plays of a certain kind, where the "pères bourgeois" (middleclass fathers) had the principal part, because in these impersonations he was inimitable. By and by, all the plays given in the Théâtre Libre became as conventional as those written for the Comédie Française, the Gymnase, or the Vaudeville, only it was the convention of the Théâtre Libre. Unknowingly Antoine was bringing back modern comedy to the formula of the "comédie bourgeoise" of Augier, which he had so violently attacked, and the public was nonplussed at seeing him burning incense at the feet of the idol he had tried to destroy.

When André Antoine undertook the foundation of the Théâtre Libre he was a clerk at the Paris Gas Company. Carried away by an irresistible impulse, he organized his company without even knowing whether they could last to give the first performance. Remarkably intelligent, possessed of a passionate love for the theatre and of an inborn sense of the stage, he overcame his lack of education by his natural gifts. Under diverse forms, his influence has been felt from 1887 to the present day. The Théâtre Libre at its inception had to conquer the most violent opposition, but it soon became a factor of first magnitude in the French theatrical world. Antoine directed it up to 1894, when he accepted the position of Co-Director of the Odéon with Paul Ginisty; his collaboration, owing to his strong personality and his love of novelty, was so stormy that he resigned after a few days and organized the Théâtre Antoine, where he ruled until he was entrusted again with the management of the Odéon, this time alone. His boldness, his passion for untried ventures, soon involved him in financial difficulties; and he left the Odéon absolutely ruined. Then he became dramatic critic for the journal L'Information, thus keeping an influence justified by his 35 years' experience, his love and intimate knowledge of the stage. He has lately directed photoplays and given a remarkable film version of Daudet's 'L'Arlésienne.'

The Théâtre Libre was important, in that (1) it discovered and brought to the attention of the public a number of young authors, and (2) it fostered the naturalistic tendencies which began to influence the stage some years after the novel. The naturalistic method was carried to violent extremes, and a reaction set in. Leaving the dregs and keeping the best there was in naturalism, the French stage endeavoured to steer a course towards a form of expression at once saner and more supple, freed from the fetters of convention.

The work of the Théâtre Libre was taken up by several other organizations of the same kind, among them the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, founded in 1894 by the excellent actor-director, Lugné-Poë. The Œuvre did not follow the lead of the Théâtre Libre; it was, at least at the start, a movement of reaction opposing the "Théâtre d'Idées" to the excesses of naturalism of the "Théâtre Vivant"; but both were opposed to the "Théâtre d'Intrigue." It gave spasmodically remarkable series of representations and has survived among many difficulties under the same leadership to the present day. The Œuvre and the Théâtre Libre were the first to bring to the Parisian public the work of the Scandinavian playwrights, Ibsen, Björnson, Strindberg, and the German authors, Hauptmann and Sudermann. Among other independent organizations may be mentioned Le Théâtre des Escholiers, founded by Georges Bourdon, and Le Théâtre d'Art, organized by the poet, Paul Fort, and the first to give Maeterlinck plays.

The Théâtre Libre gave birth to many plays conceived according to its own naturalistic æsthetics, such as the first works of Curel and Brieux, and was also responsible for the production of ultra-radical and anti-militaristic plays—a genre which has continued spasmodically to our days. Many of the works of Lucien Descaves, and Malafayde's 'Soldat et Mineur,' which caused an uproar in 1896, are representative of this category. A second wave broke in 1905 with Arquillière's 'La grande Famille' and Bernède's 'Sous l'Épaulette,' which are both excellent examples of the Théâtre Libre technique; and a more recent outburst in 1919–20 followed the disillusions caused by the Treaty of Versailles.

FRANÇOIS DE CUREL (1854–)

Whatever may be Antoine's shortcomings, the French stage will be for ever indebted to him for having brought to light François de Curel, whose 'L'Envers d'une Sainte' and 'Les Fossiles' he produced in 1892. In his 'Théâtre d'Idées' ("Théâtre" meaning here, as above, a collection of plays and not a building) Curel gave to the public some of the most artistic work of the time, and his name is probably the only one of the Théâtre Libre dramatists to whom the epithet of "genius" could be properly applied. An aristocrat by race as well as by instinct, a powerful but difficult writer, François de Curel has never consented to lower the standard of his art in order to be more easily understood. His plays never had long runs; some failed completely; but the admiration of the intellectual élite, which he won from the start, at last forced him upon the public at large. His best plays are now on the repertoire of the Comédie Française, and 'L'Ame en Folie' obtained instant recognition. Curel does not write problem plays, the aim of which is to prove a point or draw attention to a theory. Ideas themselves become a passion in his characters and clash in conflicts which have not and cannot have a conclusion; the audience remains in suspense, each one free to decide according to his temperament. Written in splendid style, his plays, to use the expression of a French critic, are composed of superb passages which make one think of the limbs of a Greek athlete. In his philosophic tale, 'La Comédie du Génie,' Curel said: "I interest the mind, but I do not touch the heart." His last play, 'La Terre Inhumaine,' seems, however, to contradict this depreciation of his own talent; in this simple melodrama, as Gérard d'Houville calls it, we have a moving tragedy of love and death. This somewhat belated war play has been hailed by the critics as far superior to any other dramatic expression of the sentiments aroused by the great conflict. With his qualities and his faults, there is no one that can be compared to Curel on the French contemporary stage.

LE GRAND GUIGNOL

In 1897, the extreme separation of genres upheld by the Théâtre Libre brought about the foundation of a small theatre called "Le Grand Guignol," which produces alternately in the same evening plays (generally one-act plays) totally different in tone, and representing the two genres that the Romantics had unsuccessfully tried to combine: the most absolute comic freedom and the most extreme tragic horror. André de Lorde, nicknamed "The Prince of Terror," is past master of this latter form of art, and the fact that one of his conspicuous successes, 'Au Téléphone,' was presented first at the Théâtre Antoine, proves the connection between the two schools. As a contrast, the Grand Guignol presents farces of a coarse and sometimes of an immoral tendency, but always intensely comic. The success of such plays shows how willingly the public has accepted this invasion of the stage by journalistic sensationalism. There is no exposition, no plot, no development, simply brutal fact presented under the limelight, without preparation, without conclusion—a slice of life with neither beginning nor end. The genre, in spite of the cleverness of the authors, can never reach the heights of art, for nothing is easier, and at the same time more pernicious, than to upset the nervous system of the spectator and to bring him to the verge of hysterics through purely physical reactions.

THE POETIC DRAMA

Although the drama in verse had lost in a large part its prestige, it never completely disappeared and was continued according to the Romantic rules through a series of plays more or less mediocre. The best belong to François Coppée (1842–1908) and to Jean Richepin (b. 1849). Émile Bergerat (b. 1845), charming poet and witty journalist, wrote long plays in verse or prose which, perhaps through ill-luck more than through lack of quality, never lasted more than a few weeks. Catulle Mendès (1848–1909) met with the same fate: his greatest successes were at best honourable failures. The triumph both of the reaction and of the drama in verse came with Rostand's 'Cyrano de Bergerac,' which is dealt with in a separate chapter. The expected Renaissance of the drama in verse produced, however, nothing worthy of mention, with the notable exception of the 'Iphigénie' of Jean Moréas.

The 'fantaisies' of André Rivoire (b. 1872), a charming and refined poet, belong more rightly to poetry than drama, one of the most successful being 'Le Bon Roi Dagobert,' a clever mixture of Gallic wit and touching pathos.

Mention should also be made of the spiritual or idealist plays of St. Georges de Bouhélier (b. 1870), and, above all, Paul Claudel, who is highly appreciated by a rather limited band of devoted followers. His dramatic work possesses all the qualities and defects of his poetry, which has already been discussed, and its abstruse expression of lofty sentiments precludes any chance of popular appeal. The Theatre Guild of New York, with commendable enterprise, put on the boards a translation of 'L'Annonce faite à Marie' in the winter of 1922–23, and the play was beautifully mounted, but it enjoyed only a short run—a fact which should not be interpreted to the discredit of the American public. It is only when Claudel has the good fortune to encounter a genuinely human subject, as in 'L'Otage,' that he is able to overcome the lack of action from which his plays usually suffer. Henri Ghéon, a younger man and a clever free-verse poet, has also tried to combine modern ideas and modes of expression with the form of the religious drama of the Middle Ages.

THE MODERNS

Making use of the suppler forms derived through action and reaction from the realist movement, dramatists began to practise rather indeterminate genres. The former distinctions of comedies of character, of manners, of intrigue, had practically disappeared, and each writer selected from these forms according to his own temperament and opportunity. At one end we find the problem play; at the other, what the French call "vaudeville," a nearly farcical comedy; in between can be placed other genres which often overlap each other so much that classification becomes an insoluble problem. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience we have divided the recent French dramatists into four categories according to the subject they have most consistently treated: the social drama, considering various problems from the institutional angle rather than from the personal; the psychological drama, the study of individual characteristics; light comedy, the aim of which is to entertain the audience through the clever display of wit, humour and sentiment; the farce, in which licence, extravagance or improbability is often employed in the desire to excite mirth.

SOCIAL DRAMA

Maurice Donnay (b. 1860) is one of the most accomplished representatives of the "esprit français," probably the one who knows best how to combine in the same play brilliant wit and a quality of observation which under a light and easy form goes deep into the recesses of the human heart. He made his début at the famous cabaret of the "Chat Noir" and soon gained recognition with 'Lysistrata,' a free treatment of Aristophanes, which made Paris roar with laughter. In 1895 he won as great a success with a comedy of a much loftier tone, 'Amants,' which Lemaître as a critic nicknamed 'Bérénicette' in memory of Racine's 'Bérénice.' All genres are easy to Donnay's clever pen—comedy in 'La Douloureuse' and 'L'Affranchie'; wild fantasy in 'Éducation de Prince'; serious thought in 'Le Torrent' and 'Georgette Lemeunier'; social satire in 'La Clairière,' and 'Oiseaux de Passage' (both with Lucien Descaves), and 'Le Retour de Jérusalem'; comedy in verse, 'Le Ménage de Molière'; high comedy, 'L'Autre Danger' and 'Paraître.' Since the War, he has been the very first to attempt the description of the changes brought about in French manners by the altered conditions of life, which he depicted in 'La Chasse à l'Homme.'

Henri Lavedan (b. 1859) made a name in literature by his amusing novelettes in dialogue form, brimming with wit and sometimes rather "risquées." 'Le Prince d'Aurec,' a bitter satire on what remains of the French aristocracy, was a success on its first production in 1894, but its revival in 1920 at the Comédie Française made a less favourable impression. He was particularly happy with 'Viveurs,' a comedy of manners depicting with amusing sarcasm the ways of the demi-monde, and no less so with 'Le Nouveau Jeu' and 'Le Vieux Marcheur,' both taken from novels which had obtained a very large sale. We have satire combined with high comedy in 'Le Marquis de Priola'; 'Le Duel' is a picture of the struggle between religious faith and free thought in the heart of a woman, and an excellent play, probably his best. His later plays, 'Sire' and 'Servir,' have interesting parts, but did not strike the same happy vein.

It is extremely difficult to assign to Abel Hermant (b. 1862) his proper place, for, although he possesses great qualities as a writer, he has never been particularly successful on the stage. Most of his plays have been adapted from his novels or stories, and this may explain why they seem to lack life. His style, of a nearly classical correctness, is terse and may be too dry to please his audience. A diplomat by career, he gathered in his wanderings through the world, as well as during his stay in different capitals in Europe, a wealth of information, of which he made good use in his first plays, satires of high quality which gave hope that, with experience, the author would probably give us, later on, some masterpiece of the comedy of manners. Unfortunately, after he had used up the information obtained during his diplomatic days, he seemed unable to renew himself, and began to write artificial comedies of high society life, witty but shallow. 'M. de Courpierre' (1907) and its successors have not kept the promise of his first plays.

Paul Hervieu (1857–1915) ought to be placed chronologically between what have been called the Donnay-Capus and the Bataille-Bernstein periods; he is an author of transition. As Henri Bidou remarks, all his work, which is confined to tragedy, starts from a general fact; a social fact in his plays on divorce, a law of nature in 'La Course du Flambeau,' or even a particular fact, the influence of chance, in 'L'Énigme.' His characters are nothing more than the instruments of the drama arising from the data of the plot; they are imagined for the action and determined by it; they are general and represent the species rather than the individual. 'Le Réveil' is a psychological drama, the story of a woman who awakens from her dream of love; it is a pathetic story, but the heroine has no personal individuality; she merely represents all the women who experience a similar fate.

The results of this dramatic system are: (1) the similarity of all the characters imagined by an author much less interested in the individual soul than in the reactions of the species; (2) especially typical of Hervieu, the construction of the plot in two parts, if attention is paid not to the number of acts or slices into which the drama is cut, but to the general movement of the action.

There is no possible evolution in a fact; it must take place, and this is the first act, which summarises the first four acts of the tragedy of old. The second act is the catastrophe. His first plays were problem plays: 'Les Tenailles' and 'La Loi de l'Homme.' Then he shifted to plays more or less melodramatic in character, the only interest of which is in the plot, which is always very plausible and cleverly unwound, such as 'L'Énigme,' 'Le Dédale,' and 'Le Réveil'; later on, he came back to a more human sort of play with 'Connais-toi.' His best play is 'La Course du Flambeau,' which showed the conflict of the different generations as they succeed each other. Hervieu writes well, but has been frequently reproached, and not without reason, for making use of a heavy kind of dialogue, consisting mainly of a succession of long monologues.

Octave Mirbeau (1848–1911) deserves a place apart; a remarkable and bitter novelist, he has written for the stage a few short plays which impress by the keenness and the malevolence of their observation, and also several high comedies: 'Les Mauvais Bergers,' a picture of the struggle between capital and labour; 'Les Affaires sont les Affaires' is a study of the financial world, and by the depth of its import, the cruelty of the repartee, the ruthless force of the principal character, and the intensity of the action, is one of the finest plays of the modern stage.

Émile Fabre (b. 1870) followed the same lead in 'L'Argent' and 'Les Ventres Dorés,' but in 'La Vie Publique,' 'Les Vainqueurs' and 'Un Grand Bourgeois,' he directs his efforts to a criticism of the political rather than the financial world. Augier had done something of this kind before, but Fabre's treatment is entirely modern. It has been suggested that in the range of his dramas he attempted some such survey of contemporary life as was achieved in 'La Comédie Humaine' of Balzac, some of whose novels he has dramatized.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA

Jules Lemaître (1854–1914), supremely intelligent, shone in nearly all forms of literature, being a brilliant short-story writer and above all one of the most sensible and sensitive critics of our time. Attracted by the stage, he wrote some keen and clever comedies which did not obtain great popularity, but gave him in the estimation of the élite a place worthy of the high rank he had gained in French criticism.

Georges de Porto-Riche (b. 1849), were he not so different in his outlook, might be compared to François de Curel for the high quality of his work; he has himself called his plays 'Théâtre d'Amour,' and it is an accurate definition. His best play, 'Amoureuse,' is a picture of passion; the plot is developed with the rapidity and the terseness, the compelling force and the absolute truth of the best classics. As regards dramatic technique and perfect conformity of style to the intrigue and to each of the characters in particular, Porto-Riche's plays are, nearly all of them, masterpieces of the modern stage. But they incur a grave criticism. It is a "Theatre of Love," but of only one form of love—that of the flesh. There is a disagreeable discrepancy between the low moral level of his personages and the lofty tone of high comedy that the author uses. His heroes are such frightful egotists that he was reproached for painting only "cads," to which he answered: "I paint my contemporaries as I see them."

A younger man, Edmond Sée, has continued, with less distinction, the Porto-Riche tradition.

The two most popular authors of the period immediately before the War were Henry Bernstein and Henry Bataille. Born in Paris in 1876, Bernstein began at Antoine's in 1900 with 'Le Marché' and followed with a succession of violent dramas, in which a furious crisis is developed with astonishing rapidity. Emotion is sought by the most brutal means, in defiance of truth and nature, but it cannot be disputed that Bernstein is endowed with the most ruthless dramatic force and that he has at his finger tips all the tricks of the trade. This explains his tremendous success, if it does not justify it from the artistic standpoint. 'Après Moi,' produced at the Comédie Française in 1911, was the cause of a violent public scandal, the young men of the Nationalist party having attempted to stop the performances on the ground that Bernstein had in his youth deserted from the French army. In 1917 he produced 'Élévation,' in which he tried to show how souls were uplifted by the War. His natural gift did not permit him to treat such a subject in a fitting manner, any more than it served him for the plays that he wrote between 1911 and 1914, such as 'L'Assaut' and 'Le Secret,' in which, under the influence of bitter criticism, he tried to put more humanity and truth into his work. His style is forceful, but not artistic. His dialogue is good stage dialogue, but lacks that finish which ensures to an author the admiration of posterity. His plays are "current events," and as such profit by the interest of actuality, but they will probably share the fate of newspapers, eagerly read and soon forgotten. His last work, 'Judith' (Oct., 1922), taken from the Bible, differs considerably from his previous dramas. It was well received by the critics and deserved to be, for it is moving by the intensity of its passion and by the clever handling of the amorous passages.

Henry Bataille (1872–1922) began his career at the Théâtre de L'Œuvre in 1894 with 'La Belle au Bois Dormant.' Then he wrote several plays in free verse and an adaptation of Tolstoy's 'Resurrection.' It was only about 1904 that he found the form best adapted to his temperament with 'Maman Colibri,' which was followed by others of the same type. Once in his life Bataille met with a subject which was human and true. It was 'La Femme Nue,' in which one sees an artist abandon the faithful companion of his hard times when he has reached the summits of glory. All his other plays are the triumph of artificiality, from the literary standpoint as well as from the dramatic. His style is grandiloquent, turgid, marred by false lyricism. The society he tries to depict has never existed except in his mind. The human beings he puts on the stage are exceptional, abnormal, mentally deficient. Their actions lack plausibility, for all boast of the most noble principles and commit the vilest acts without suspecting what they are doing; or they accomplish superhuman sacrifices without being possessed of the strong will or of the lofty devotion necessary as a motive. This is morbid drama, and the foreigner should on no account judge French society from these productions. Sometimes, however, Bataille succeeds in poetic passages which give the illusion of genuine emotion. 'La Tendresse,' his last play, is an excellent example of what this strange mixture of qualities and faults can produce; charming passages of sentiment are marred by the undercurrent of amoralism which characterizes nearly all his work.

The most promising successor of these authors is Sacha Guitry (b. 1885). Son of one of the greatest actors of our time, he began in his teens with a playlet, 'Chez les Zoaques,' which was very well received. From his youth, Sacha Guitry showed a remarkable mastery in comedies of a keen, cruel, cynical observation, frequently overstepping the bounds of propriety, which were not immoral, but which indicated a freedom from any sense of morality. Endowed with the most versatile mind, he has never ceased to look for new forms of expression; during the War he wrote several comedies and plays in free verse. These were followed by a number of plays composed of cleverly selected episodes in the life of famous men: 'Jean de la Fontaine,' 'Deburau,' 'Pasteur' and 'Béranger,' which recall and perhaps suggested the 'Lincoln' of John Drinkwater. His most recent work reveals two different tendencies—towards light comedy in 'Le Blanc et le Noir' and 'Je t'Aime,' the latter a very amusing though entirely innocuous bedroom play—towards more serious drama in 'Le Comédien,' an extremely powerful study of the life of the actor, and 'Un Sujet de Roman,' a study of the life of the author. Guitry has the remarkable record of having produced forty plays before he was forty years of age, and we may still expect from him a great deal more than the much he has already offered us. He is a gifted actor and generally plays the lead in his own works, often supported by his handsome wife, Yvonne Printemps.

LIGHT COMEDY

More superficial, far less versatile than Donnay, Alfred Capus (1858–1922) wrote easy sentimental comedies which charmed the audience by their cleverness and their pleasant wit. "Tout s'arrange" seemed to be the motto of this smiling optimist. He was a very prolific author, his greatest successes being 'La Veine' and 'Notre Jeunesse.' After the War, Capus gave up the stage to become chief editor, first of 'Le Figaro,' and later of 'Le Gaulois.'

Robert de Flers (b. 1872) and Armand de Caillavet

(1869–1915) were as fortunate in their collaboration as Meilhac and Halévy during the Second Empire. They were the masters of what may be called Parisian Comedy. On very slender facts, they built, with great adroitness, plausible intrigues which Scribe would not have disowned. They possessed to a high degree "l'art des préparations." As Adolphe Brisson points out: "A Latin audience hates incoherence and disorder, appreciates well-composed plays where all the incidents dovetail, wishes to understand without effort, and is not averse to optimistic illusions. The average Parisian theatre-goer wants to be amused, and is somewhat disheartened by the bare and cruel truth. The supreme art of Flers and Caillavet consists in distorting the characters agreeably and using their keen gift of observation in the details; so their comedies offer the double charm of romantic fiction and of accurate actuality; the intrigues are artificial, but the episodes are true." If you add to this a Gallic wit, a felicity of expression which compels laughter, and excellent style (for they write infinitely better than Scribe) you have all that is needed to be successful on the stage. But they are endowed with a still greater gift: the smile. They do not laugh uproariously, bitterly, bitingly; they merely smile; and that smile permits them to tackle the most burning questions: they may discuss religious conflicts, mock the politicians, tease the French Academy, overstep the bounds of propriety, but they do it smilingly, and the victims of their shafts smile back and bear no grudge. Their greatest success was 'Le Roi' (1908), a side-splitting satire of the antics of a sovereign having a good time in gay Paris. A fair adaptation of this play was given in New York with Leo Dietrichstein in the chief part. Robert de Flers became with Alfred Capus co-editor of 'Le Figaro,' and then of 'Le Gaulois'; since Caillavet's death, Flers has produced several plays in collaboration with Francis de Croisset.

Pierre Wolf (b. 1865) has composed many light comedies of trifling import, but well built and well written. The best of all is 'Le Secret de Polichinel.'

Romain Coolus (b. 1868) emulates Pierre Wolf. His plays show the same understanding of the necessities of the stage and the same flimsiness of plot. 'Petite Peste' gives a fair idea of his work.

FRENCH FARCE

This expression translates more or less accurately what the French would call "comédie légère" or even vaudeville, which was originally a comedy intermingled with songs addressed to the public, and is now a specially gay form of light comedy. It has always been the cause of deep misunderstanding between the Anglo-Saxons and the Latins, the latter accusing the former of being hypocrites and the former accusing the latter of being filthy-minded. Both accusations are, of course, false; but this does not clarify the ground of the misunderstanding. An American critic, writing about one of the so-called "bedroom" farces produced in New York, makes a distinction which may throw some light on the issue:

> "At the Palais Royal (a well known Parisian playhouse) one witnesses much more intimate revelations than in this play, but at the Palais Royal, the treatment is frank and ingenuous, instead of sly and stupid, and the shocks are taken as they come, rather than pursued into hidden corners. We are given to understand that we are dealing with accepted facts, commonly comprehended, and freely and generally discussed. I

am not receding from my position that the theatre is for sophisticated adults, but homemade French farce is for the sophistication of Cedar Creek. My objection to being treated like a child not only covers not mentioning what every woman knows, but mentioning it gratuitously, leeringly, as though we didn't know, as though the tree of knowledge grew only in the secret orchard."

This does not mean, of course, that all plays of this type produced in Paris are interesting or that they all possess the saving grace of wit; the French are the first to cry loudly that many are shocking and would be far better unwritten. A few authors deserve to be cited who by real qualities have justified the success they enjoyed.

The masters of this amusing and not very deep genre are Alexandre Bisson and Georges Feydeau. Bisson (1848–1911) would be somewhat out of date were not his plays given again and again, always with success. His specialty was a kind of vaudeville (in the French sense), remarkable for its extremely complicated plots, developed with an uncanny facility, and for a sort of machine gun dialogue full of witticisms, without pretention to special delicacy, but of side-splitting effect. His best known plays were 'Feu Toupinel,' 'Le Contrôleur des Wagon-lits,' 'La Famille Pont-Biquet,' and above all 'Les Surprises de Divorce' (1888), which ran for three years with a full house every night and still reappears from time to time, always with the same success.

Georges Feydeau (b. 1862), possessed of the same gifts as an artist of comedy, is superior by the quality of his wit; even delicate minds can appreciate the best in his plays, 'La Dame de Chez Maxim,' 'Occupe-toi d'Amélie,' 'On Purge Bébé,' a masterpiece of its kind in spite of its odd title. Feydeau could have succeeded in high comedy, had he wanted to; many passages of his clever "fantasies" prove that he can write on a higher plane than the one he usually selected, and that he can analyse as well as he can write.

Tristan Bernard (b. 1868) writes comedies of a much higher tone. He affects a seriousness which emphasises the comic side of his situations. He often has the most felicitous vein of inspiration and then is inimitable. His favourite type is the irresolute, hesitating man, who never knows what to do or even what he wants; his most frequent trick to induce laughter is to represent things exactly the reverse of what they should be in reality. Whatever is the worth of this process, the author almost invariably secures his effect. His plays are well written, in simple and direct language, without attempt at wit. 'Triplepatte' and 'Le Petit Café' are excellent types of his work.

Georges Courteline (b. 1861) is in a class by himself. Catulle Mendès compared him to Molière, and he is a true son of the old Gallic brood, one of the few who continue the tradition of a sane gaiety based on deep knowledge of reality, expressed in simple, picturesque and correct style. His short comedies sometimes look to the casual reader like coarse farces; a more attentive observation will detect a quality of genuine, far-reaching psychology which sometimes emulates the great classics. Short in extent, slight in matter, Courteline's plays are great by their truth, comic power, and pitiless observation.

AFTER THE WAR

What happened to the French drama after the War? On August 2, 1914, it ceased to exist so far as the stage was concerned. Towards the end of 1915, when the national life had been adapted to a war of attrition, some theatres timidly opened their doors and by and by resumed a semi-normal activity. At first only well known and well tried plays were given, and when the directors began to stage novelties, they accepted nothing of importance. The tragedy of the trenches monopolized all the interest of the French. Soon appeared what was called "les pièces pour permissionaires"—plays for men on leave—simple farces written to induce laughter and only that. Between two battles the men wanted to laugh as loudly and as long as they could; they had to forget that it was perhaps for the last time. In fact, the soldiers patronised the theatres in much greater numbers than the civilians left at home; the latter would have felt shame in being too gay. Little by little, things settled down to a routine; middle-aged authors who had won renown before the beginning of the conflict began to resume their work very much along the same lines as before; the young ones did not write—they had more pressing work to attend to.

One of the greatest successes was obtained by a play in free verse, 'Les Butors et la Finette' (1918), in which a young poet, François Porché, who had done his share of the fighting, developed a noble patriotic symbol with qualities more poetic than dramatic. His second play, 'La Jeune Fille aux Joues roses,' was a failure. In other plays he followed the Rostand tradition without great success.

After the War there was an outburst of patriotic plays of but mediocre craftsmanship. The only one which showed serious dramatic qualities was 'La Trempe' by Midouze, staged at the reorganized Théâtre Libre.

THE VIEUX COLOMBIER

Many artists place their hopes in the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier. Founded in 1913 by Jacques Copeau, it barely existed until the War, but in that uphill struggle it won the esteem of the intellectuals. During the War Copeau gave two seasons in New York and amazed his scant audiences by obtaining with a minimum of means a maximum of effect; his rendering of the classics was a feast for the amateurs. The theatre reopened in Paris in 1919 and resumed its work, which promises to emulate in influence the old Théâtre Libre, though its aims are absolutely different. Jacques Copeau is a writer and a critic who has been led to acting and stage directing by an unbounded love for dramatic art. He possesses all that the founders of the Théâtre Libre lacked: culture, literary taste, broad views; at the same time, he shares their qualities: passionate devotion to the drama as a form of art and absolute disinterestedness. That the Vieux Colombier will eventually bring about an evolution as important as that caused by Théâtre Libre, may be reasonably hoped. Copeau is endeavoring to restore in France a taste for the high classical form, but he is still groping, and has not definitely found his way; his aim is clear enough. During the period which followed the reconstitution of his theatre in Paris (1920–1922) he gave plays very simple in composition, seeking truth and natural comedy, by authors more or less inexperienced and deficient in technique, but possessed of the gift of dramatic emotion: 'Le Paquebot Ténacité,' by Vildrac; 'L'Œuvre des Athlètes,' by Georges Duhamel, who had already produced a very original play, 'Dans l'Ombre des Statues' (Odéon, 1912); 'La Folle Journée,' by E. Mazaud; 'Le Pauvre sous l'Escalier,' by Henri Ghéon; 'Cromedeyre-le-vieil,' by Jules Romains. Among his offerings for the season of 1922–23 we find: 'Le Souper interrompu,' by P. J. Toulet; 'La Maison natale,' by Jacques Copeau; 'Soir d'Emmaüs,' by André Suarès; 'Michel Auclair,' by Charles Vildrac; 'Monsieur Le Trouhadec saisi par la Débauche,' by Jules Romains.

During the summer of 1922 Copeau took the road with his company and went to the provinces, to Switzerland, and even to Rhenish Germany; everywhere he was more than welcomed. He has only begun his career, but he has already won the élite, the scholars as well as the students, and is making large inroads in the ranks of the public. To believe his admirers, all that he needs is time; it is around him that the evolution which is destined to shape the course of dramatic art in France is taking place. In truth, many of the new Reviews, 'La Revue critique des Idées et des Livres,' 'La Revue Universelle,' even 'La Nouvelle Revue Française,' show tendencies towards a reversion to the qualities admired in the classics: reason, taste, strength, and simplicity. How far that ideal can be realised is a question that the future alone can answer, but if the movement fails it will not be through lack of earnestness.

Such a renaissance is very much to be desired, for there is little doubt that the French stage is more or less at a standstill. The directors, overburdened by heavy taxes, are complaining bitterly that it is impossible for them to risk large slices of their capital in new and untried ventures; the increase of prices turns the public aside towards the cinema, which from a literary point of view is not much better in Paris than anywhere else. Except Hébertot at the Champs Élysées, Gémier at the Odéon, Copeau at the Vieux Colombier, and perhaps two or three others, none of the managers shows any particular interest in the higher side of his profession.

Among the new authors whose names appear on the posters none, with the possible exception of Paul Géraldy ('Aimer,' 1921), and some of the authors of the Vieux Colombier, seems to have the qualities required to win more than temporary success. But the resources of France are infinite in matters of art, especially of dramatic art, and in view of the fact that she has led the civilised world in theatrical enterprise for a century or more, nothing would be more surprising than her failure to hold her long-established supremacy.

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Flers and Caillavet: See under Caillavet.

Flers and Croisset: See under Croisset.

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Wolf, Pierre, 'Le Secret de Polichinelle' (1903); 'L'Age d'aimer' (1905); 'Le Ruisseau' (1907); 'Le Lys' (with G. Leroux, 1908); 'Les Marionnettes' (1910); L'Amour défendu' (1911); 'Le Voile déchiré' (1919); 'Les Ailes brisées' (1920); 'Le Chemin de Damas' (1921).

THÉÂTRE LIBRE

The following plays were produced at the Théâtre Libre and form a group by themselves. A few other plays, not actually produced at the Théâtre Libre, but of the same type, though of later date, have been indicated:

Aicard, Jean, ‘Le Père Lebonnard’ (1889).
Ajalbert, Jean, ‘La Fille Elisa’ (adapted from E. de Goncourt, 1890).
Ancey, Georges (G. Mathison de Carmère)—‘Monsieur Lamblain’ (1888); ‘L’Ecole des Veufs,’ ‘Les Inséparables’ (1889); ‘La Grandmère’ (1890); ‘La Dupe’ (1891).
Boniface, Maurice, ‘La Tante Léontine’ (with Edouard Bodin, 1890).
Céard, Henry, ‘Tout pour l’Honneur’ (adapted from Zola, 1887); ‘Les Résignés’ (1889); ‘La Pêche’ (1890).
Darien, Georges, ‘Les Chapons’ (with Descaves, 1890); also at the Théâtre Antoine: ‘Biribi’ (with Lauras, 1901).
Descaves, Lucien, ‘La Pelote’ (with P. Bonnetain, 1888); ‘Les Chapons’ (with Darien, 1890). At other theatres: ‘La Cage’ (1898); ‘La Clairière (with M. Donnay, 1900); ‘Tiers Etat’ (1902); ‘Oiseaux de Passage’ (with M. Donnay, 1904); ‘L’Attentat’ (with A. Capus), ‘La Préférée’ (1906); ‘Atelier d’Aveugles’ (1911); ‘La Saignée 1870–1’ (with Nozière, 1913); ‘L’As de Cœur’ (1920).
Ginisty, Paul, ‘Deux Tourtereaux’ (with Jules Guérin, 1890); ‘Le jeune Premier’ (1891).
Hennique, Léon, ‘Jacques Damour’ (adapted from Zola, 1887); ‘Esther Brandès’ (1887); ‘La Mort du Duc d’Enghien’ (1888).
Julien, Jean, ‘La Sérénade’ (1887); ‘L’Echéance’ (1889); ‘Le Maître’ (1890); also: ‘La Poigne’ (not at the Théâtre Libre but the best of his pieces).
Lecomte, Georges, ‘La Meule’ (1891); ‘Les Mirages’ (1892).
Méténier, Oscar, ‘En Famille’ (1887); ‘La Casserole’ (1889); ‘Mlle. Fifi’ (adapted from Guy de Maupassant, 1896).
Salandri, Gaston, ‘La Prose’ (1888); ‘La Rançon’ (1891); ‘Le Grappin’ (1892).
Vaucaire, Maurice, ‘Un beau Soir’ (1891); ‘Valet de Cœur’ (1893); ‘Le Poète et le Financier’ (1893).

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEW NOVEL

We have considered in previous chapters the rise of the naturalistic novel under the leadership of Zola and Maupassant during the period of depression following 1870 and the "renaissance française" under the leadership of Bourget and Barrès. In studying the novelists of the present generation, the danger of attaching a label to each name is obvious, for we do not know how far and in what direction these young talents may eventually develop. Nevertheless, for purposes of convenience and clarity, some classification is necessary, and the divisions adopted below claim no higher virtue or authority.

THE OLDER MODERNS

Among the modern masters who have continued the "roman à thèse," some have emphasized the moral side, others the psychological. Taking first the authors whose names have been long familiar to the public, we may say of René Bazin (b. 1853), that he appears to be marking time. His work after the War is of the same quality as before, and of very much the same trend. He is still the charming painter of country life and a staunch supporter of tradition. He studies in 'Les Nouveaux Oberlés' practically the same characters he had outlined in 'Les

Oberlés' and throws them into the midst of the conflict created in Alsace by the war of 1914.

Henri Bordeaux (b. 1878) also clings to his old gods: in his series of 'La Vie Recommencée,' he upholds the rights of the family as he did in 'La Maison' and 'Les Roquevillard,' but his conception of morals is broader than before; the sinner is no longer treated as a loathsome object, but as an object of pity.

Marcel Prévost (b. 1863), since the publication of 'Monsieur et Madame Moloch,' has devoted all his efforts toward the study of "cas de conscience" in the French middle class. His morality is rather terre-à-terre, his style commonplace, and in spite of a real cleverness in the composition of his plots he has never found again the force which characterized 'Le Scorpion,' unpleasant to read, but giving promise which has not been fulfilled, although wide popularity has crowned his endeavours.

THE NOVEL OF FAITH

Shortly before the War there arose a literary school which devoted its efforts to the "religious novel," the "novel of faith." Ernest Psichari, killed in action; André Lafon, Robert Vallery-Radot, François Mauriac, Émile Baumann, all attempted to describe religious sentiments or the evolution of a soul from free thought to faith. Ernest Psichari (1883–1914), grandson of Ernest Renan, after a descriptive novel, 'Terres de Soleil et de Sommeil,' started in search of a faith that would be a haven to his tortured soul. André Beaunier has very justly characterized this attitude as "the quest for a dogma." 'L'Appel des Armes' shows us Ernest Psichari, torn between doubt and need of certitude, trying to satisfy his desire for discipline in the military career; very soon he discovers the artificiality of discipline which commands solely the body; but he meets God on his way and henceforth is safe. The story of this search for God is the 'Voyage du Centurion,' where one finds something of the accent of Pascal and of the sternness of Joseph de Maistre.

André Lafon (1889–1915) avoids the great problems of religious life and confines himself to narrower subjects; he tells us with shadowy images and in a tone artlessly discreet, which sometimes becomes monotonous, the quaint adventures of 'L'Élève Gilles' (which won the Grand Prix of the Académie Française in 1912) and the still more commonplace history of 'La Maison sur la Rive.'

Robert Vallery-Radot (b. 1853) yields to the appeal of poetry, and 'Leur Royaume' is the most poetic, the most exquisitely delicate soul-study of two young girls and of a writer terrified by the appeal of the flesh. 'L'Homme de Désir' goes deeper into the same problem and shows us how insidious temptation is.

'L'Enfant Chargé de Chaînes' (1913), by François Mauriac, deals somewhat similarly with the story of a child burdened by concupiscence of the mind and of the flesh.

In 'L'Immolé,' 'La Fosse aux Lions,' 'Le Baptême de Pauline Ardel,' and 'Le Fer sur l'Enclume,' Émile Baumann (b. 1868) reveals a robust romantic temperament endowed with considerable wealth of expression. The vague and mystic dreams of the young Catholic novelists do not interest him; he tackles the gravest problems of the inner life in their connection with the supernatural world. Baumann was one of the two winners of the Grand Prix Balzac in 1922 with 'Job le Prédestiné.' He has not yet entirely evolved, and we may expect from him books in which the intensity of mystic life will shine more brilliantly than ever.

THE SOCIAL NOVEL

Social problems are to the fore in the national life of every country, and the social novel is a natural development of the times. In France the form of the social novel has been affected by the authority of Zola, with his consciousness of the crowd and of large communities, and by the evocative power and philosophic significance of the work of the brothers Rosny. The social novelists may be defined, somewhat generously, as all those who consider their characters not as individuals but in relation to the collective consciousness, or, more narrowly, as those who have in view some definite doctrine of sociology or political economy.

The recognised master of this genre in its narrower definition is Pierre Hamp (b. 1876). Hard, uncouth, he has cut his way among the mixed and whimsical cohort which follows the lead of André Gide in the 'Nouvelle Revue Française.' All his books are of the same type; you will always find the same sentence, which aims not at elegance but at accuracy of expression, and keeps in its primitive harshness a flavour of patient and long sustained labour. Very few French writers are more conscientious in precision of detail; he may lack charm, but he is strangely forceful. His aggressive revolutionarism does not meet with the approval of the majority of the public, but when one has been caught in the maze of his rather involved novels, one must go to the very end. Whatever may be Hamp's political and social opinions, his practical knowledge of the workingman's existence and the clearness of his pictures cannot be disputed. With him there is no deceit; one knows perfectly well where one is led; his considerations of social problems are not sketches taken at random, but well thought out studies. Often he is caught at his own game, the social theorist forgets his preachings, and the intuitive realist willingly gives himself up to the deep poetry which rises from a landscape in Northern France or a wheatfield in Picardy. The power of the earth is so strong that an earnest writer who wishes to be useful cannot help finding the closest connection between himself and the perfect harmony of the seasons and of the land which feeds men.

Charles-Louis Philippe (1874–1909) is typical of the kind of socialistic novelist who presents a certain class or group for our sympathetic consideration without teaching any distinct economic or political doctrine. Of peasant stock, he lived on the meagre resources supplied by a clerkship in the Paris city hall. Ailing and needy, he led a wretched existence, and without doubt, the profound compassion always expressed in his books for the disinherited of this world is a direct consequence of his own life; the irony which is always mixed with his descriptions shows that he was afraid of self-pity. The only people he could know well were little prostitutes of the lowest category, insignificant underclerks, cogs of their administrations, or the poorest farmhands. Do not seek any other characters than these in his painstaking and lovingly written studies. When he made his début in French literature, the Symbolist movement still exercised a powerful attraction on young writers, and in consequence the style of his first work is not free from affectation. Moreover, he was under the spell of Nietzsche and of the Russian novelists, but in his heart he felt a too warm and too active sympathy for the narrow little world which was his own, he had a love for perfection too deep not to discard quickly outside influences and discover his true personality. Little by little he attained a remarkable sobriety of style, and he conceived the scheme of depicting the slow initiation of the child to the stern law of hard work by telling the history of his own father. He developed and disciplined at the same time that grave and tender lyricism which is the characteristic of his talent; he had succeeded in building up a terse and truly classic technique and was in full possession of a most noble instrument of expression when death broke the last tie which bound his brave soul to his weak body.

Philippe's influence, for a time imperceptible, is now evident in many of the younger writers. Among those who felt it, Jules Romains (b. 1885) became famous at the very start. He had founded the Unanimist School and gathered under his leadership a phalanx of youthful and eager writers. He emphasized the secret but powerful ties which bind together men even totally unknown to each other. In his 'Mort de Quelqu'un' he illustrates this theory by showing to what extent the death of a tenant of a large apartment house in Paris, ignored by his fellows, reacts in the most roundabout way on the life of all the rest. In his last novels, without abandoning anything of his initial system, Jules Romains discloses an exuberance, an intoxication of the joys of life, a bitter and powerful comic sense which encourages us to expect much from his future work. He has already blazed a new road; where it will lead may be a matter of some concern, but his qualities as a writer will probably get the upper hand of his social fancies.

Charles Vildrac was one of the first adepts of Unanimism. Today, although he has practically thrown overboard these tenets, he remains none the less under their spell. But the most noticeable influence that can be detected in his work, particularly in his verse, is that of Walt Whitman. Vildrac is a thoughtful writer and produces very little; his only novel 'Découvertes' and his play 'Le Paquebot Ténacité' have not disappointed the hope his first literary essays induced; under a technique perhaps too systematic there are real qualities of thought and style which deserve the respect and attention of men of letters.

Georges Duhamel (b. 1884) as a poet belongs to the school of Jules Romains and Walt Whitman; as a dramatist he seems a follower of Paul Claudel; as a literary critic, at the same time dogmatic and wavering, he appeared to be little more than an unimportant disciple of the Unanimist school; the War showed him the road he was meant to follow in fiction. 'La Vie des Martyrs,' one of the most beautiful books inspired by the great struggle, is extremely simple, even bare—only a few episodes keenly observed and related with a terse sobriety and an extraordinary, but rather subdued, power of emotion. He is moved by the harsh destiny of the victims and indignant at the authors of the tragic upheaval, but his feelings are well kept in hand and their expression is the more effective for being never overdone. His sensibility is akin to that of Charles-Louis Philippe or of the great Russian novelists, but the angle from which he looks upon events associates him with Anatole France. He is inclined, under the transparent veil of an apologue, to sharpen the irony of fate against the stupidity of mortals. Often he shows a vein of satiric philosophy of the highest order and rejuvenates the spirit of the old French fabliaux. Each of his subsequent works was steadily freer from strangeness of system and style; and he has taken his legitimate place among the best and the most thoroughly French writers of our time. Without borrowing anything from the great French "Frondeurs," Rabelais, Diderot, or Renan, he perpetuates the tradition; his clear style, his wealth of thought, his generosity, which has never feared Utopia, make him worthy of being named after them.

From his début A. T'Sterstevens compelled attention by the haughty and vehement tone of his novels. He does not hesitate to tackle the most abstruse problems under a symbolistic form and he does it in a powerful style, full of suggestive imagery. At first people saw in him a new prophet of socialism, but his last work, 'Un Apostolat,' shrouds in irony a lively story of an attempt at communism. Whatever may be in the bottom of his mind, T'Sterstevens is a writer of interest and of promise.

Léon Frapié (b. 1863) cannot be properly appreciated unless you place him at the date at which his first story appeared, that is, the very first years of the twentieth century. Above any one else, he interested himself in the psychology of the street urchin of Paris, unwashed, uncombed, but witty and attractive, hotheaded and warm-hearted. Without doubt he had predecessors; Victor Hugo sketched for us the immortal silhouette of Gavroche, but he placed him on a sort of pedestal and made of him an epic though altogether conventional figure; and Jules Vallès in 'L'Enfant' had given a far deeper and more moving study of child character. The real interest of Frapié's books is in the sane and sound psychology, in the descriptions true to life, in the dialogues, made up of words which have really been pronounced by children. In his way, he is a forerunner, and his stories of the children of the poor will always be read with pleasure and emotion.

Gaston Chérau (b. 1872) is a conscientious worker in details whose æsthetics come directly from the naturalist school, but rather from Flaubert or even Huysmans than from Zola. His best works are minute studies of provincial life in which the accumulation and clever selection of facts give to the story a powerful relief. 'Champi-Tortu,' the story of a crippled child and of his sufferings in college up to the time of his accidental death; 'La Prison de Verre,' the gray and dull existence of a young woman compelled to live in a family not her own and under the sharp and unsympathetic eyes of a small community; 'Valentine Pacquault,' the sinking and the regeneration of a modern Bovary—such are the subjects which permitted Chérau to show his qualities of story teller and moralist to their full extent.

One of the authors who contributed most strongly and in a way unconsciously to the defeat of Naturalism is Paul Adam (1862–1920). In his first books, he is still an adept of Zola's theories, but his intuitive temperament carries him in another direction; he cannot lose his time in childish details; he does not copy his characters, he creates them; in spite of himself, he gives to his personages a symbolistic meaning and generalises men and situations. Coming from a family in which imperialistic traditions were close and strong, he attempted in a series of novels the epic history of the Héricourt family from the first empire to contemporary times. In 'Soi' he begins "an evocation of the life of the end of the Empire, a fusion of psychological intimism with the 'écriture artiste.'" Then, like Zola and Rosny, he tries the cyclic form, so as to keep narrow and continuous bonds with life; 'Les Volontés Merveilleuses' becomes a trilogy; 'Etre,' 'En Décor,' 'L'Essence du Soleil.' Later on, he wrote a tetralogy, and embarked upon an enormous production which ended with the posthumous publication in 1920 of 'Rheims Dévastée.' Is Paul Adam an epic romancer? If epic means that he has sung his country with all the fire of a loving devotee, fully conscious of the value and of the beauty of the object of his love, he surely is. A well known critic said, "His whole life, that of a daring initiate, is a hymn to his country." In spite of the violence and of the harshness of some of his books, Paul Adam was gifted with the most human qualities. One of his lifelong friends said of him: "This intellectual had a tender heart, this furious worker was indulgent. At the bottom of the retorts of his ideological alchemy, he found simplicity and kindness." At any rate, in the long line of the French novelists, Paul Adam appears as a bold writer. He had the literary courage to restore to its proper place the novel of ideas, and he dared to use the cyclic form, which made too great demands upon the frivolity of the novel-reading public before the War.

That great catastrophe gave to this conscientious worker—too late for him, unfortunately—an audience worthy of him and of his creative force.

"Regionalist" literature is closely linked to the social novel and there is no more attractive way to learn French geography and provincial customs than to study Brittany with Le Braz and Charles Le Goffic, Normandy with Maupassant, Provence with Daudet and Louis Bertrand, Lorraine with Maurice Barrès and Émile Moselly, Alsace with René Bazin and André Lichtenberger, Auvergne with Paul Bourget, Limousin with the brothers Tharaud and Jean Nesmy, Bourbonnais with Charles-Louis Philippe and Jean Giraudoux, Savoie with Henri Bordeaux, the Basque country with P. J. Toulet and Pierre Loti, the Cévennes with Ferdinand Fabre, Vendée with Pérochon, Bourgogne with Edouard Estaunié, Touraine with René Boylesve, and so on.

THE NOVEL OF ADVENTURE

The "roman d'aventures" has come into fashion again. It is in a way a reaction against the slavish subservience of the Naturalists to crude fact. It demands a plausible imagination and a simple but vivid style. Under its modern commonplace form of "roman de police" (detective story), Valentin Mandelstamm, Maurice Leblanc, Gaston Leroux, and Maurice Renard have offered us very exciting and entertaining tales, but none that can be classed as literature, if we except Mandelstamm's 'Jim Blackwood, Jockey,' which failed to win the suffrage of the Goncourt Academy by a very scant margin.

The unfavourable criticism just offered does not apply to Pierre Mille (b. 1864) who has been foremost among the men who helped to restore the novel of imagination to its legitimate place. A short story writer rather than a novelist, he is endowed with all the qualities required for the successful composition of great stories of adventure, but his work goes much deeper than that. He is known to the public as the father of the immortal Barnavaux, heroic incarnation of the French Colonial soldier; for this reason he has been compared to Rudyard Kipling, creator of Private Mulvaney of the Indian Army. For many readers Mille is nothing more than a great traveller and an accurate observer, but those who look below the surface of things, who have pondered over 'Barnavaux et quelques Femmes,' 'Caillou et Tilli,' 'Paraboles et Diversions' and 'Myrrhine,' soon understand they are face to face with more than a mere storyteller. Pierre Mille's imagination is endowed with such visualising power that he and his readers see his heroes, live with them as Balzac did with his characters; and at the same time the writer possesses such a gift of analysis that he can enrich the psychology of his people by the power of others' experiences as well as of his own. Moreover, Pierre Mille's style, at once suggestive and remarkably simple, is the exact opposite of what had been called "l'écriture artiste." His influence is therefore opposed in a twofold way to the theories of the Naturalist school; as to the matter, the author must be a creator more than an observer; he must do more than copy nature, he must interpret it; as to the manner, he must give up all affectation and "recherche" and achieve suggestiveness through absolute simplicity.

Pierre Mille's art leads us directly to the Colonial Movement, which has been bitterly accused by the

Pacifists of fostering an imperialistic spirit among the younger generation in France. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing in French literature as a colonial movement. Some authors have incidentally selected a colony as the setting of some novel, but none has done it consistently enough to be justly called a colonial writer, if we except perhaps Loti, to whom no one has dreamed of applying such an epithet. Nevertheless, in the same way as one can study the French provinces in a selection of French novels, one can get acquainted with the Colonial Empire of France. Beside Loti and Mille, Jean Ajalbert, Jules Boissière, Myriam Harry, Émile Nolly, A. de Pouvourville, Georges Jary have given us visions of far off lands which may often make us regret the commonplace existence of our great cities.

Claude Farrère (b. 1876), an officer in the Navy with a turn for brilliant description, especially of oriental scenes, gave promise in his earlier work of becoming a worthy successor of Pierre Loti. His Indo-Chinese novel 'Les Civilisés' won the Goncourt prize in 1905, and 'L'Homme qui assassina' was a nearly perfect example of the novel of adventure in a highly picturesque Turkish setting; but his subsequent work, though still meritorious, hardly fulfilled the expectations that had been formed of the development of his talent.

THE NOVEL OF MANNERS

The present trend of French literature, while abandoning the method of Zola, seems to be toward a sane and well-balanced realism. The form of realistic novel which has been selected by our contemporaries is still the novel of manners. Edmond Jaloux (b. 1878) in 'Les

Sangsues' tells a most tragic story with absolutely realistic detail and intense psychology; a whole city lives and acts in this book; a house and its inhabitants are made visible to us. What accurate sketches are those of the old priest mocked by his own people, of the prodigal and lying sister-in-law, of the young girls, with their characters so tersely outlined! The same qualities are found in 'Fumèes de la Campagne,' and 'Au-dessus de la Ville,' and there is very little doubt that we may expect much of a writer who has just attained to the full mastery of his art.

Émile Henriot is not satisfied with psychological debates and fanciful plots. One may discern in 'Le Diable à l'Hôtel' a scrupulous study of provincial customs and of the very special ways of the inhabitants of southern France.

René Benjamin (b. 1885) is experienced in the game; his care for details, his sense of humour, have won for him recognition, principally with his war novel 'Gaspard (Prix Goncourt 1914) full of genuine gaiety and, sometimes, of pathos. In 'Le Palais et les Gens de Justice' and 'Amadou Bolcheviste' he gives free rein to his inclination for satire. Since the War he has revealed himself as a journalist and polemist of superior ability.

Jean Giraudoux (b. 1882) has had such a well-filled existence that when people hear that he has been a student of the École Normale Supérieure, a professor, the secretary of the newspaper 'Le Matin,' a member of the diplomatic service, they expect to meet a man of mature years, and are much surprised to see a slim man of about forty, whose clean shaven face appears still younger. He began his literary career as a writer of poems in prose, of a great variety of forms, lyric and humorous in turn, or even at the same time. His first book, 'Les Provinciales,' won immediate recognition; his charming pictures of the French provinces were so personal that they marked him as a writer of decided originality and promise. 'Lectures pour une Ombre' is one of the few war books of high literary value. 'Amica America,' a description of what he saw when, after being wounded twice, he was sent to the United States as officer-instructor, will endear him to every American of literary propensities, for he did not try to see America as the land of the captains of industry, of the huge factories, of the trusts. As Edmond Jaloux said in the New York review 'La France,' he wanted to describe "the country of wholesome, happy girls and young men, the America of poets and of lofty, noble sentiments. . . . He gives a half real, half fantastic account of what he has seen—an account that is whimsical, graceful and humorous. Jean Giraudoux shows clearly how far away French literature has gone from the writers who said everything and underlined every detail however vulgar, how indisputably it is returning to the traditions of the men of the seventeenth and eighteenth century." Giraudoux was one of the two winners of the Grand Prix Balzac in 1922 with 'Siegfried et le Limousin,' a strange story of shellshock and amnesia.

Eugène Montfort (b. 1877), editor of the excellent literary review 'Les Marges,' has always shown a predilection for the sea and seafarers, particularly for the picturesque and passionate Mediterranean. The cosmopolitan Marseilles, the open door to the Orient, attracts him; 'L'Amour à Quarante Ans' reveals a rich and colourful talent of description; 'Mon Brigadier Triboulère,' with its keen psychological notation, seems to open a new phase in the literary life of this virile writer. He seems even more gifted for this latter form, and we should like to see him devote henceforth his endeavours to this field, for however attractive may be the port of Marseilles, the study of the human soul is a far more interesting problem.

Louis Bertrand (b. 1866), chose to sail also from Marseilles for his adventure in Mediterranean countries. His novel 'L'Infante' is truly, to use the expression of Paul Bourget, "a copied hallucination." It has been called a historical novel; this may seem far fetched, but closer analysis of the book shows that the expression is quite accurate. It starts from an insignificant happening, such a commonplace and slender fact that it is a mere anecdote, but "beyond this anecdote Louis Bertrand perceives a broader tragedy, the encounter and the conflict of two Kingdoms." He never loses sight of what he considers the intellectual duty of the present hour.

René Boylesve (b. 1867), the charming author of 'La Leçon d'Amour dans un Parc,' the exquisite painter of the "états d'âme" of 'Madeleine' is endowed with a totally different temperament. Everyday life is for him without appeal; his instincts often bring him down to earth, but it is only to start on a new tack in a new dream. His imagination gives him the power of creating anew periods of a distant past, particularly that delicous eighteenth century with its elegant graces, its childish torments, its marchionesses, past mistresses in the difficult art of intermingling philosophic disquisitions with the dangerous game of love, its sarcastic marquises who chat so cleverly and strut about laughing at themselves. But this evocation is only a memory; Boylesve knows it well and he responds readily to the appeal of reality. "You have ceased to be anything," he says to the woman in 'Tu n'es plus Rien,' "you do not count any more in the indescribable chaos of war. Men suffer; their flesh is torn, their soul shrieks; your husband is dead; give yourself up to destiny; victim, become a martyr of your own free will" . . . And his lesson of sorrow is stronger and more moving than that of love.

The brothers Tharaud (Jérome b. 1874, Jean b. 1877), have won recognition through patient and severe work; in their many-sided talent, the dominant note is ceaseless endeavour toward a classical perfection of form, most noticeable in the various editions of 'Dingley, l'illustre Ecrivain.' In 'La Fête Arabe' and 'Marrakech,' the most colourful exoticism gives occasion to descriptions which if less poetic than those of Loti, make perhaps a more poignant appeal for a dying civilisation, with their terse precision which gives the reader a feeling of absolute truthfulness. 'La Servante Maîtresse' is full of delicate psychological satire.

André Gide (b. 1869), is another master of the novel of observation. 'La Porte Étroite' and principally 'Les Caves de Vatican' have placed him among the foremost of the new generation. His style is peculiar; passing from exaggerated terseness to superbundance of images and epithets, it possesses force, but lacks vivacity. Gide's preoccupation with accurate psychological analysis goes so far in minute detail that at times it strikes the reader as unhealthy; Gide suffers from an over-anxious soul, and he revels in his anxiety. Excellent examples of his qualities and his faults may be found in the selections from 'Si le Grain ne Meurt' published in the 'Nouvelle Revue Française.'

WOMEN NOVELISTS

The place of women in literature has improved in proportion to the betterment of their social condition, civilisation recognising for them a freedom far greater than ever before, and the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of woman writers.

In the novel, one of the forerunners of the present movement is la Comtesse de Martel (b. 1850), who under the pen name of "Gyp," has gathered in a humorous form a veritable mine of documents on the Parisian life of her time. She has been a picturesque historian of the spoiled children of society; in another field, she showed herself a bold and bitter pamphleteer when she took sides in the great Nationalist movement which played such an important part in French politics; finally she created that interesting type of young girl, independent in her ways, logical in her thought, sane, sound and absolutely honest under a frivolous appearance, whom we have so frequently met since, in books as well as on the stage. "Gyp" often used the dialogue form in her novels and achieved extraordinary success with it.

This form was definitely consecrated by the strong and delicate talent of Madame Jane Marni (1854–1910), who deserves to be remembered, not only for the literary value of her work, but for the truthfulness and the keenness of the analysis in which she put in full light the hidden motives of her contemporaries. She was the painter of the French high bourgeoisie, as "Gyp" was the witty and deft analyst of the aristocracy.

Madame Rachilde (b. 1862) made her début at the time of the heroic fights of Symbolism. She loved to describe in stories full of suggestive imagery the conflict between thought and love, life and dreams. Maurice Barrès gave her the nickname of "Mademoiselle Baudelaire." Today she is just as sincere in her writings, but time has soothed her violent soul; her authority and her high conception of the novelist's art and her absolute disinterestedness make of her a conspicuous figure of the French world of letters.

Marcelle Tinayre (b. 1872) has not shown this beautiful indifference to success; from the beginning she wooed fortune and fortune smiled upon her. Taking up again the old liberal theses of Georges Sand, she adapted them very cleverly to the tone of her day. In her best books, 'La Maison du Péché,' 'La Rebelle' and 'Perséphone,' she plays with great cleverness and subtle discretion round some philosophical theory. Her philosophy is worldly, but it endows her writings with an appearance of intellectuality which gives her readers the illusion that they are dabbling in serious thinking. Moreover, Madame Tinayre won her greatest success with descriptions of passion in which, although claiming the absolute liberty of woman as regards love, she has always tempered her audacity with a certain respect for propriety; thus she avoids shocking her bourgeois readers more than they wish.

The Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles, beside her glorious reputation as a poet, has won the name of one of the greatest lyric romance writers of her time. Her three novels won as much applause as her verse. Her heroes partake of the same qualities and the same faults she discloses in her poetry. They feel a thoroughly pagan love for the beauty of the world and recall to us the fauns of mythology rather than men. All have the same psychology; they want to taste of all the cups; they want to exhaust every feeling or sensation before death comes to call them. In all it is the same adventure of desire, always reviving but never fulfilled. The wealth of the style, the spontaneous imagery which surges naturally under the pen of Madame de Noailles make of these books an ever renewed enchanment.

The talent of Gérard d'Houville is more intellectual than sensitive, and this difference underlies the radical opposition between her work and that of her literary rival, whose novels have just been discussed. Daughter and wife of great writers, Madame de Régnier-Hérédia, under the pen name of Gérard d'Houville, is certainly in French letters an offspring of the classics, Marivaux, Racine, Musset. Not only does the tone, harmonious and pure, which she always uses, recall Racine, but, like that matchless painter of human passion, she prefers the noble classical themes of love and death. All her novels tell of the failure of love, or rather, of the impossibility for man and woman to understand each other fully. This cruel lesson of life is so well hidden under the roses of her poetry that the reader must be very attentive to discover it. Without ever being sentimental, she shows herself in turn arch and sad, wise and taunting. She adorns all that she touches with a natural and spontaneous grace, and makes us love a heart at the same time faithless and constant; she profits by the evanescent charm of the hour to embellish, by the power of her dreams and illusions, everything—even tears.

Madame Colette shares with the two preceding authors the favour of the élite. She began writing in collaboration with Willy, the clever humorist, then her husband, the famous series of 'The Adventures of Claudine.' At the first attempt, they created a type, the success of which was enormous and lasting. But in 'Dialogues de Bêtes' (1897), she signed alone, and has since proved herself one of the greatest prose writers of our time. She feels a tender love for all animals; her dogs, and perhaps still more her cats, are truly human. Madame Colette, who at a certain period of her life was a mimic and a comedian, has a first hand knowledge of that special world whose members hover on the borders of regular society, and in some cases, through talent or money, succeed in becoming a part of it. She has sketched agreeable descriptions of what goes on behind the scenes of the music halls. With exceptional strength and depth she has outlined in 'La Vagabonde,' 'L'Entrave,' and 'Chéri,' the torments of a woman, famous and worshipped, who feels her youth escaping every day; and the gradual isolation of the heart, as well as the charm which is capriciously given and taken away by nature, is expressed with an extraordinary clarity. Her technique is classic and enables her to render most exactly the changing and complex shades of modern sensations. Her books are neither more nor less than a perpetual confession, and this confession, at the same time sober and daring, arouses in the reader the deepest emotion by a simple and felicitous combination of words which reveals a truly great writer.

Madame Delarue-Mardrus brings in her writings the same sort of passion, at once candid and artful, that we admire in Madame Colette's work, but she is not possessed of the same power of expression. Undoubtedly, she has a literary temperament, but she looks too much to public opinion for direction and she follows the fashion of the moment more than the permanent taste of the race. In her best books, however, we find pages full of tender charm and of colourful imagination.

The work of André Cortis (b. 1885) is distinguished by a calm and thoughtful sensibility; with a delicate touch, keen insight, and absolute sincerity, she probes the depths of the soul, but she deliberately avoids pessimism; her outlook is consoling. 'Pour moi seule' is a lesson of wisdom. One must not rebel against fate and wish for an exceptional destiny; here below everything is simple, and we must accept our life as it is offered to us; lofty dreams are soon dispelled, and their wings close for ever in the silence of our deluded hearts. But it does not matter if our destiny is commonplace, provided that we brighten it with the rays of our inner life. When André Cortis condescends to describe the life of her province, the love of her native land softens the severe analyst in her; in other times one would have said of her "a virile mind and a womanly heart."

Beside the propriety of Madame Cortis, the spicy wit of Jeanne Landre makes an amusing contrast. Full of whim and caprice, Madame Landre is the romancer of Montmartre and the modern disciple of a Mürger still more bohemian than the original. Her impulsive and jeering babble is keenly appreciated by a limited public, free from scruples, rather naughty, but not wicked.

One of the lesser charms of Gérard d'Houville's works is the picturesqueness of the tropical atmosphere. Other authors have found in exoticism the permanent interest of their writings. Myriam Harry (b. 1875) was one of the first to imitate Loti, but in a more erotic manner, by injecting oriental voluptuousness into the mild love affairs of the far-eastern palatial hotels. Unfortunately, her Indo-Chinese are as conventional as the well dressed gentlemen and ladies who play the heroes' parts in her stories.

Of an entirely different tone are the books of Isabelle Eberhardt. Of Russian origin, she lived in the Sahara as an Arab and shared the eventful life of the nomadic tribes. She thus gathered first hand information which permitted her to evoke for us the dreams of the Arabic soul with extreme simplicity and power of expression. Magali Boisnard and Elissa Rhaïs followed in her footsteps and gave us brilliant pictures of Islam, its customs and its civilisation. The condition of women in Moslem countries was for a long time practically unknown; these women writers formed friendships with the inhabitants of the harems and have been thus enabled to give us accurate details of their life.

Some women novelists endeavoured to attract the attention of the public by developing the theme of feminism. Daniel Lesueur (b. 1860) owes the best part of her renown to the fact that she specialised in this field. On all that concerns girls' education and the training of women professors Gabrielle Réval has earned a well deserved reputation; the accuracy of her information, the seriousness of her thought, the quality of her style, her cleverness as a novelist, not averse to shocking her readers, have won for her a prominent place among the women writers. Her impartiality has never been absolute; all her books are more or less pleas for her own point of view, and she always appears to be on trial; nevertheless, her contributions to the psychology of the feminine intellectuals in France will remain very moving and precious documents.

Colette Yver (b. 1874) has devoted all her efforts to the great problems of sex equality. Her principal originality consists in the fact that although her mind is open to any new theory, no matter how advanced, she nevertheless does not conclude in favour of feminism. For her, the place of woman is in the home under the protection, love and respect of man.

Madame Camille Pert (b. 1865) is tumultuously in favour of women's rights. She started from psycho-physiological themes, the exaggeration of which seemed to kindle her combativeness, and she outlined for us in the stories of 'Cady' the woman of the future more scornful of conventionality than really revolted by it, more brazen than independent.

In these novelists, women's claims were presented in an indirect way, whilst Madame Madeleine Marx makes a straight attack with all the oratorical violence of an electoral speech. Her books strike the reader as feminist and socialist manifestoes, presented with more vehemence than logic, and more fighting spirit than caution.

Marguerite Audoux is totally different; to see in her work a harangue against the present organization of society it is necessary to interpret it in a manner the author never contemplated. Her two books about Marie-Claire are after all the very bare and very moving story of a seamstress; many assert that it is only an autobiography slightly altered so as to give it the form of a novel. The terseness of the style, the sober accent of the emotion, recall strangely the mannerisms of Charles-Louis Philippe, whom Madame Audoux must have known or at least read. Her books, unpretentious from the literary point of view, have certainly high value as psychological studies.

Keenness of analysis makes also the interest of the writings of Madame Marcelle Vioux, who in 'Une Enlisée' and 'Une Repentie' probes boldly into the depth of a feminine heart which for a time lost its way in the wilds of passion, but kept the flower of its sensibility and that innate uprightness which helped it toward redemption.

Raymonde Machard has been content to take up again the eternal theme of maternity. On this subject she has not found any new note in the psychological gamut, but she has dared to describe subjectively the physiology of childbearing, which, up to that time, had always been considered objectively in medical treatises.

Besides realism, psychological in Marguerite Audoux, descriptive in Marcelle Vioux, physiological in Raymonde Machard, we find again the freshness of sentiment under the pen of Jane Cals. With careful and delicate touches of the brush she depicts the awakening of love in a youthful soul in which the feeling of nature had brought the first understanding of beauty.

All that can move a sensitive heart: pride of liberty, sweetness or tyranny of love, beauty of the earth, mirages of the wandering clouds, fantasy of dreams as well as tragedies of everyday life, all these subjects have been treated by modern women writers; their earnestness, the intelligence of their analysis, the honesty of their craftsmanship make of them in this field, at any rate, the equals of men.

THE ACADEMY GONCOURT

The Academy Goncourt has had on the French novel an influence which can in a way be compared to that of the Théâtre Libre on the French stage. In 1896 Edmond de Goncourt who, with his brother Jules, who died in 1870, had created the impressionist novel and "l'écriture artiste," bequeathed his fortune to eight French writers: Léon Hennique, Gustave Geffroy, J. K. Huysmans, Paul Margueritte, Alphonse Daudet, Octave Mirbeau, Jules Rosny, and Henry Rosny. Their mission was to found an academy which was to bear the name of the donor; their principal function was to award every year a prize of 5,000 francs, conferred "on youth, boldness, and talent." A long litigation delayed the organization until April 7, 1900, and Alphonse Daudet died before taking his seat. The total number of Academicians had been fixed at ten and after many changes caused by death, the actual membership is as follows: Léon Hennique, Gustave Geffroy, Henry Céard, Jean Ajalbert, Émile Bergerat, Jules Rosny, Henry Rosny, Élémir Bourges, Léon Daudet, Lucien Descaves.

The artistic tenets of the original as well as of the present members are widely different, and there was no danger that their influence would be used for the perpetuation of impressionistic literature, producing only worthless imitations of the "écriture artiste," which gave highly interesting results under the clever pens of the Goncourts, but did not fare so well in the hands of their copyists.

Nevertheless, at the very beginning, the existence of this danger became evident. Many "pasticheurs," believing that the Academy's aim was to perpetuate that tradition, came forth with monstrous compositions. When in 1903 the Academicians made their first award, they gave the prize to a clumsy analysis of insanity; this contributed to increase the misunderstanding between the public and the Academy. The following year, among the works presented, was a book written in a sort of negro dialect, and in a referendum of the press, public opinion, misled by a mistaken idea, awarded it the prize beforehand; the Ten did not consider it and selected a book of a far more conservative technique. Since that time extravagance of style has been more and more discouraged by the Goncourtians and often they have selected books of a decidedly classical form.

The Goncourt prize, which is now the most highly esteemed recompense offered to young writers, has been for them a worthy incentive. The judgments of the Academy have always been strictly impartial, and, on the whole, well founded. Being human, the Goncourtians have sometimes made mistakes, but their influence has been wholesome and they have supplemented in a worthy manner the work of the Académie Française. A list of the honoured books is given at the end of this chapter, and among them will be found excellent examples of the modern French novel.

WAR NOVELS

Of the war novels, little need be said. One was attempted by nearly everybody endowed with the gift of expression, and a mere catalogue of titles would fill a large volume. The subject was so vast that it seemed to smother the personal and distinctive qualities of the authors, especially those of well-established renown. On the other hand, the intellectual reaction of the conflict gave stimulus and opportunity to a few who would otherwise never have thought of writing. Some of these books were good, but the majority were more interesting for the historical data they contained or for the absolute frankness of the author's impressions than for literary merit.

Of these Henri Barbusse's 'Le Feu' caused more discussion than any other. When it appeared, Barbusse was practically unknown to the public. His first attempt at poetry dated from 1893, when he won a prize offered by the 'Écho de Paris.' From that date to 1917, during twenty-four years, he published but three books—a volume of poems and two novels, 'Les Suppliants' (1903) and 'L'Enfer' (1908). None of these was successful, and such a scant production could have not brought fame to its author, had not Barbusse married the daughter of Catulle Mendès, a picturesque writer and journalist and one of the most remarkable press agents ever born. 'Le Feu' was awarded the prize of the Goncourt Academy in 1916, and though the choice was very far from commanding general approval, the success of the book was instant and enormous; more than 300,000 copies were sold in four years. This was partially, perhaps largely, due to reasons which had little to do with literature. The novel appeared at a period when France, shaken by three years of war and distracted by political intrigues, was suffering from low morale. Barbusse's book, which represented and exaggerated this moral depression, was enthusiastically welcomed by the small but noisy minority who liked it because of their defeatist sympathies. Its success in France and its Zolaesque exaggeration of the horrors of war gave it a sensational appeal in neutral and more or less pro-German countries; many French people resented the wide circulation of a book which they regarded as a libel on the spirit of France and an act of which no Frenchman could be proud, but they were hardly in a position to make the reasons for their resentment clear to foreigners at the time. 'Le Feu' undoubtedly contains some powerful pages, but it shows a reversion to Zola's æsthetics, stressing the filthy side of things to the exclusion of other phases, which were to be found in the War as they are in life. As a result of the sensational success of this work, the author's earlier book, 'L'Enfer,' which had rested for years in obscurity, suddenly sprang into a momentary popularity it did not deserve either for its technique or for its content, which is disgusting to the point of scandal. Barbusse's last offering, 'Clarté,' is a tract in the form of a novel, presenting very cleverly, though not without irritating bias, the same defeatist point of view as 'Le Feu'; but by this time public sympathy, more alive to the author's intent, was alienated. In spite of what has too often been said in America, Barbusse cannot be considered as "one of the best known littérateurs in France," for his success was due to temporary and political considerations rather than to the permanent literary qualities of his work.

War literature, however, offers many names more worthy of consideration. Among the novels deserving the name of works of art should be mentioned 'Bourru, Soldat de Vauquois' by Jean des Vignes Rouges, who gives us in it a terse and moving picture of the poilu fighting valiantly against tremendous odds; 'Les Croix de Bois,' by Roland Dorgelès, an excellent example of legitimate realism expressed in a noble and almost classical style; 'L'Humaniste à la Guerre' by Paul Cazin, a clever analysis of the reaction of the conflict on a highly cultured mind; 'Une Relève' by the brothers Tharaud; 'La Vie des Martyrs' by Georges Duhamel; and 'Lectures pour une Ombre' by Jean Giraudoux. It must be noted that the French intellectuals called up for military service never lost sight of the idealistic side of the sacrifice involved; they felt more intensely than anyone the heart-rending horror of the monstrous hecatomb, but they realised that they were defending the soil that had nourished their ancestors, and this thought enabled them to make the effort of will necessary to master their personal inclination. The national sacrifice was, in fact, too great to find immediate and adequate expression in literary form, and the War still awaits its appropriate masterpiece in French literature.

AFTER THE WAR

Most of the writers known before the cataclysm of 1914 continued to follow the road they had engaged in before. The newcomers were few. Among them, Pierre Benoît and Marcel Proust obtained immediate and considerable success. Pierre Benoît's 'Koenigsmark' was accepted enthusiastically by the public as a beautiful book full at once of mystery and of careful observation. Was it a novel of imagination or a romance of adventure? It is both of these and more. 'L'Atlantide,' with its marvellous description of the Desert, soon followed with still greater success. Pierre Benoît always observes a fact, records an anecdote, places us face to face with everyday life; his description is accurate, his documentation flawless. But he is hardly started before he abandons reality, gives free rein to his imagination, and enters upon the road of romance. Yet all the details of the wellnigh impossible dream are so plausible that the reader cannot discern the point of cleavage between fact and fancy; and the dream appears as not only possible and probable, but true. What happens to the hero of Benoît's third book, 'Pour Don Carlos,' is entirely fantastic; but startling as it is, the adventure remains realistic in this, that all the incidents are historical facts subjected to the usual distortion of legend. His latest productions, 'Le Grand Lac Salé,' 'La Chaussée des Géants,' and 'L'Oublié' do not appear to have met with the same success, but their author is young and resourceful, and he may very well strike again some rich vein either along the same line or even in an entirely different direction. The latter alternative would be preferable, for he has shown a tendency to repeat himself in his themes. In the 'Lac Salé' the combination is very much the same as in 'L'Atlantide'—a woman vampire between two men in the latter, and a male vampire between two women in the former. The parallelism between 'Pour Don Carlos' and 'La Chaussée des Géants' is still greater, the central fact in both being an insurrection, and the characters having respectively very much the same traits.

It was by the style of his earlier books, as André Rousseaux pointed out in 'La Minerve Française,' that Benoît first won the admiration of the French public. By style Rousseaux means the harmony of the composition and of the writing with the subject and the care to develop essentials even at the sacrifice of secondary qualities. This is due to the personal inspiration of the author, but it is a personal inspiration derived from genuinely national tradition. His later work depends for success rather upon comic verve.

Rousseaux also gives evidence of Benoît's careful documentation, for both 'L'Atlantide' and 'Pour Don Carlos.' Benoît was accused of borrowing the plot of 'L'Atlantide' from Rider Haggard's 'She,' and litigation on this point left the issue unsatisfactorily doubtful; but French opinion gave its verdict in favour of the French writer, apparently with good reason. After the War, the French pounced eagerly upon these charming works of imagination, which helped them to forget this tortured and burdened world, and to escape into a fairyland which still bore a fantastic likeness to actuality.

Marcel Proust (1871–1922) with his second novel, 'A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs' (the first being 'Du Côté de Chez Swann'), gained the Goncourt prize by one vote over 'Les Croix de Bois' of Roland Dorgelès. The award caused violent polemics in the press; it was said that the aim of the Goncourt prize was to encourage and help young authors and that Marcel Proust was nearly fifty, more a man of the world than a writer, and a man of wealth to boot. As Paul Souday answered in 'Le

Temps,' a man is a beginner, a young author, so long as he has not won public recognition; Henri Barbusse and Léon Frapié were both past forty when they won the same prize; and one cannot ostracize a writer because he is a "mondain." The Goncourt Academy, in preferring his excellent work to another probably as worthy, wished to recognise a book of peace after having for five years selected books of war. The two volumes mentioned above were the beginning of a long series called, 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu'; it might have been called 'Mémoires d'un Esprit' as was suggested by "Orion" in 'L'Action Française.' Sometimes when we look backward in our past life, some incidents appear to us with the vividness of cinematographic films, with startling precision in the linking of cause and effect; we understand then actions and motives which we could not grasp at the time. But we realise that if we tried to translate these visions into words, they would appear and disappear like brilliant mirages. We must abandon all hope of reproducing them faithfully in writing; too many things pass through our minds in too short a time. Yet this is precisely what Marcel Proust tried to do. His endless analysis shows us the days of his past life as they flew by; his general title might be interpreted, "See how I squandered my time as an observer of human hearts."

Son of Dr. Proust, a famous professor of medicine, welcomed in the most various and most exclusive circles of French society, endowed with his father's gift of diagnosis, Marcel Proust looked at men moving before his eyes, put them under the microscope of his analytical mind, and endeavoured to discover not only their gentler and more obvious failings but their secret motives, their hidden vices, the hypocrisy of their virtues, their moral obliquities. His work recalls that of a pathologist working on a cellular tissue. And he enjoys this vivisection, which to many readers appears cruel; for him human life is more a comedy than a tragedy, but this comic side may remain hidden under the surface even for the reader who is able to persevere in the face of the difficulties of a style which is strong but hard. Often the author tries to express too much by dividing his sentence into various planes. Like the writers of the seventeenth century, he loves to juggle with incidental and sub-incidental clauses until the amazed reader, almost lost in the middle of a one-page sentence, despairs of seeing it concluded in an understandable manner; but after many turns and face-abouts, Proust catches the loose end of his initial remark and there it is; he has done it, all is perfectly clear, and we marvel at the way it has been done.

Since Le Calprenède, Mademoiselle de Scudéry and Richardson, we have been unaccustomed to novels of huge size. Romain Rolland had taken up the older tradition in 'Jean-Christophe'; but he had been careful to offer his work to the public in rather thin slices; Marcel Proust carves his into very thick ones; the text, printed in small type, is solid, without stops, without paragraphs; when you look at it, you feel awed, and have a mind to put the book down on your table and take to some easier reading. But if you begin, you are lost; these novels, without plot or logical construction, take hold of you in some uncanny manner and you go through, struggling along, until with a sigh you see the word "end"; then, learning that there is a "suite," you run to your bookseller to get it. Why? Those who have tried to explain have to content themselves with saying: "It is so." Probably it looks so much like life that we imagine ourselves witnessing the comedy.

Marcel Proust has been bitterly attacked by the critics. "He is the snob of humour," says one; "he is at the same time the snob of super-refined psycho-analysis as it was practised about 1890; he is the snob of descriptive impressionism, without mentioning botticellism or preraphaelitism, conspicuous in the title of his book, 'A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs'; the conjunction of all these snobberies, so far from nature, has made of him the most difficult writer of his time." Others reproach him for making his novels look like "the contents of a chiffonier scattered helter skelter on the floor," or for writing so difficult a French that the average reader cannot understand it. The most interesting because the most significant criticism is that he absolutely subordinates sensibility to intelligence. For this very reason he has been justly praised by the adherents of the classic formula. "He is thus joining the great classic tradition," says Jacques Rivière in 'La Nouvelle Revue Française.' Unlike the Romantics, who always tried to make us believe in things without showing them . . . he brings water to the mill of our reason and anew gives work to our reflective faculty."

He has been compared to St. Simon, and Paul Souday, pointing out that this comparison is inaccurate, adds: "One has seldom expressed with greater force and bitterness the feeling of perpetual change and movement which makes of our lives a succession of fragmentary deaths. This book is profoundly sad, as most great books are sad, because they are profoundly human." Coming from a critic as severe as the critic of 'Le Temps,' these few words mean much. It should be added that Proust never shrank before any subject, however distasteful; his first books were not "*ad usum puellarum*" and the last chapter of 'Le Côté de Guermantes' hinted that he was about to engage upon a road on which many readers would refuse to follow him, whatever might be his skill. The title, 'Sodome et Gomorrhe,' was not encouraging to those who had already been distressed by a certain morbid strain in his talent, and their forebodings were confirmed when the new volumes were published. There is a certain similarity between Zola's 'Pot-Bouille' and 'Sodome et Gomorrhe,' with the important exception that Marcel Proust is endowed with a charm and a gift of irony that Zola never possessed. He may be reproached for his leniency towards the vices he describes. This leniency is not indifference, but an expression of his satisfaction in proving the accuracy of his diagnosis. The theory of moral relativity which dominates his work, above all the last novels, offers to the astonished reader many occasions to admire the extraordinary acuteness of his mind as well as his power of expressing the most evanescent shades of sentiment.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The War thinned the ranks of French writers; many careers which promised much were cut short in their bloom: Paul Drouot, Louis Codet, Lucien Rolmer, Charles Müller, Guy de Cassagnac, Lionel des Rieux, Émile Nolly, Charles Péguy, Émile Clermont, Ernest Psichari, Alain Fournier—so many, famous, or about to be, who never gave the best there was in them, having given their all to their country. But has it changed anything in the general trend of French literature, as so many people claim? It does not appear so, at least for the present, or to any great extent. At the end of the War, the French literary world was in a turmoil; every group and coterie wished to make itself heard and to promulgate far and wide the new rules which were to regulate French literary activity. Many a manifesto was published with a great flourish, and is already forgotten. Three, however, deserve consideration; those of the 'Nouvelle Revue Française,' of Romain Rolland, and of the "Parti de l'Intelligence."

According to the 'Nouvelle Revue Française,' the War has changed nothing and ought to change nothing in French literature. Literature is a superior game of disinterested minds; during the War, art and talent were, so to speak, mobilised for the needs of the country; the exceptional circumstances having passed by, men of letters must forget the catastrophe and resume dispassionately their normal activities. They will take interest in the problems of the time, but will keep their art and their political or social opinions strictly apart, for literature has suffered too much from the mixing of these diverse elements. This attitude, which strictly separates art and life, is the antithesis of the opinions expressed in the other manifestoes.

For Romain Rolland, art must be international; there is no such thing as French or German culture, there is only European culture. (Apparently he forgot America.) Men of letters must be propagandists; their aim should be to effect a prompt reconciliation between French and German civilisations, which are only part of a whole.

Except for the adherents of 'Clarté,' a small coterie named after Barbusse's book, this manifesto was coldly received in France, or completely ignored.

For the "Parti de l'Intelligence," French literature must be French, intensely French; this was to be expected, and from the purely literary point of view it is not of special interest to the American student. But, as its name indicates, "Le Parti de l'Intelligence" wishes to make intelligence or reason rule over sensibility—in other words, to discard the tenets of Romanticism and Zolaism, and revert to classical tradition. This tendency is not new, for it is evident in the work of René Boylesve, of the brothers Tharaud, of Louis Bertrand, in Henri de Régnier's 'La Cité des Eaux,' in 'Colette Baudoche' by Maurice Barrès; it is obvious that the War did not create the movement, though possibly it intensified it. The manifesto of the 'Nouvelle Revue Française' also "welcomes the claim of intelligence, which visibly today tries to resume its rights in art—not in order to supplant sensibility, but to penetrate it, analyse it, rule over it." On this point 'La Nouvelle Revue Française' and "Le Parti de l'Intelligence," the two most important groups of young French writers, are in accord, if they differ on many other points. From this it may be surmised that the "Renaissance de l'Intelligence" is symptomatic of a state of mind which may considerably influence the future of French letters.

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1903 John Antoine Nau, 'Force ennemie.'
1904 Léon Frapié, 'La Maternelle.'
1905 Claude Farrère, 'Les Civilisés.'
1906 Jérome et Jean Tharaud, 'Dingley l'Illustre Ecrivain.'
1907 Emile Moselly, 'Terres lorraines.'
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1909 Marius-Ary Leblond, 'En France.'
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1911 Alphonse de Chateaubriant, 'Monsieur des Lourdines.'
1912 André Savignon, 'Les Filles de la Pluie, Scènes de la Vie ouessantine.'
1913 Marc Elder, 'Le Peuple de la Mer.'
1914 Prize awarded in 1916.
1915 René Benjamin, 'Gaspard.'
1916 Henri Barbusse, 'Le Feu, Journal d'une Escouade.'
1916 Adrien Bertrand, 'L'Appel du Sol.'
1917 Henry Malherbe, 'La Flamme au Poing.'
1918 Georges Duhamel, 'Civilisation.'
1919 Marcel Proust, 'A l'Ombre des jeunes Filles en Fleurs.'
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1921 René Maran, 'Batouala.'
1922 Henri Béraud, 'Vitriol de Lune' (1921); 'Le Martyr de l'Obèse' (1922).

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